

The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces

AMDO

Volume 1. The Qinghai Part of Amdo

Andreas Gruschke



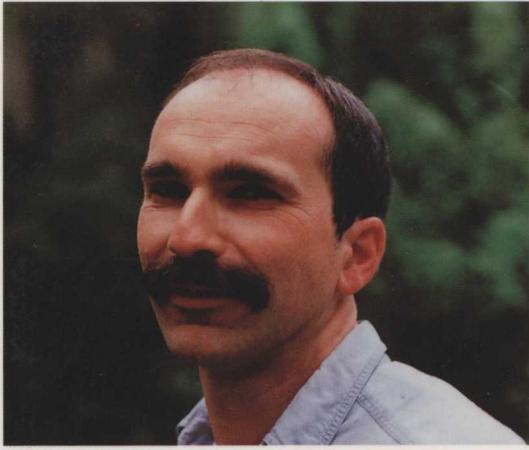
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Andreas Gruschke was born in 1960, and now lives and works in the Southwest German city of Freiburg. From 1982 to 1990 he studied geography, ethnology (cultural anthropology), and sinology at the universities in Aachen, Freiburg, and Beijing (1984/85). He worked as a lecturer at Shanxi Agricultural University in Taigu, Shanxi, PRC, in (1985/86), and at Kangweon National University in Chuncheon, South Korea (1992/93). From 1987 he has guided study tours through Eastern and Central Asia, with emphasis on Tibet and the Silk Road. During numerous private stays the author continued research on Tibetan culture, with special interest in the ethnic development and the relationship between various peoples in contact. Altogether, he has been more than 25 times to the various parts of the Tibetan realm, thus having travelled some 70,000 km in the highlands, from Ladakh and Western Tibet, several Tibetan areas in the Himalayas, Southern and Central Tibet, and the vast steppes of the Changthang in the plateau's heart, up to almost every area in Amdo and Kham in the East. His publications mostly deal with Tibetan culture, including picture albums on Tibet, books on the oral tradition of the Tibetans, and articles on ethnography, history, and society.

His publications include the following books:

- * "Weisheit der Tibeter", [Wisdom of the Tibetans] with meditation plates and wall paintings of Tibetan monasteries, Stürtz Publications, Würzburg (Germany) 1995.
 - Special edition by Flechsig Buchvertrieb, Würzburg 1998
- * "Mythen und Legenden der Tibeter. Von Kriegern, Mönchen, Dämonen und dem Ursprung der Welt", [Myths and Legends of the Tibetans. Tales of Warriors, Monks, Demons and the Origine of the World], an anthology as a "mythical geography of Tibet", Diederichs Publications, Yellow Series DG 124, Munich (Germany) 1996
- * "Dach der Welt", [Roof of the World], volume of plates of the book series "Encounter with the Horizon", C.J. Bucher Publications, Munich (Germany) 1996, Reprint 1998
- * "Tibet", [Tibet], volume of plates of the book series "Encounter with the Horizon", C.J. Bucher Publications, Munich (Germany) 1996, Reprint 1998
- * "Die heiligen Stätten der Tibeter. Mythen und Legenden von Kailash bis Shambhala", [The Holy Sites of the Tibetans. Myths and Legends from Kailash to Shambhala], an anthology as a "mythical geography of Tibet", Yellow Series DG 137, Diederichs Publications, Munich (Germany) 1997

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White Lotus Press

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of Tibet's Outer Province
AMDO
Volume I
The Qinghai Past to Present
Andreas Gruschke

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White Lotus Co., Ltd.
G.P.O. Box 1141
Bangkok 10501
Thailand
Telephone: (662) 332-4915 and (662) 741-6288-9
Fax: (662) 741-6607 and (662) 741-6287
E-mail: ande@loxinfo.co.th
Website: <http://thailine.com/lotus>
Printed in Thailand

ISBN 974-7534-52-9 pbk White Lotus Co., Ltd., Bangkok

Front cover picture: A distant view of the three kumbum chörten,
Achonggya Monastery (Qinghai)

Back cover picture: Old bronzes in the dukhang of Achonggya Monastery (Green Tara)

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Foreword

This is volume one of several volumes presenting the first systematic survey of the historical monuments of eastern Tibet in the traditional provinces of Kham and Amdo. It includes some isolated Lamaistic foundations and works of art within the nowadays ethnic Han Chinese territories. For example, Qutan Monastery between Xining and Lanzhou or certain cave sanctuaries along the Silk Road margin like Mati Si or Bingling grottoes, are arranged according to the modern Chinese administration within the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan.

Originally it was our plan as co-authors to include all the historical monuments of the Tibetan northeast in a single co-authored volume on the whole of eastern and western Tibet. The material collected about the east of the Tibetan plateau alone had become so extensive that we decided to split it off into several separate volumes, of which Andreas Gruschke now presents the first one on Amdo.

Unlike any other scholar in these days, this author was able to combine the best possible qualifications for such an extraordinary publication. During the last years Andreas Gruschke travelled extensively in the whole of eastern Tibet and to the best of my knowledge nobody else has so far been able to do such stunning field research. Being fluent in Chinese he managed to get a wealth of information on the spot, resolve precisely so many linguistic problems of geographical and proper names, and obtained access to recent and often 'remote' publications on these areas which are mostly available in Chinese language only. Besides this Andreas Gruschke is an experienced geographer and a very historically minded author, which has enabled him to give a detailed historico-geographical interpretation and definition of these Tibeto-Chinese borderlands. And last but not least, he is an excellent photographer who could record many, if not most, of these cultural monuments for the first time.

Our knowledge on art and archaeology *in situ*, which has improved considerably since the 1980s

due to the possibilities of travel in once 'forbidden' Tibet is usually focused much more on 'classical' Tibet of the central regions—the provinces of U (*dbus*) and Tsang (*gtsang*)—the historical heartland of Tibet since the dynastic beginnings during the seventh through ninth centuries. Whereas earlier systematic field research has been undertaken in the Gyantse and Yarlung Valley areas as well as in western Tibet by Professor Giuseppe Tucci between 1933 and 1948, the whole of eastern Tibet has never been thoroughly investigated, with the exception of Wilhelm Filchner's comprehensive documentation of the Kumbum monastery in Amdo. These studies were published in three monographs in German (1906, 1935, 1954). A few substantial modern Chinese publications on this famous monastery followed in 1982 (Beijing; with English text and many illustrations), 1986 (Beijing, with excellent plans; and Xining, Chinese translation from the Tibetan), and 1996 (Beijing, report on the repairs). An unpublished thesis in two volumes, *A Study on the sKu-'bum/T'a-erh ssu Monastery in Ch'ing-hai*, has been written by the German Tibetologist Joachim Karsten (Auckland University, New Zealand, 1997). Although Joseph F. Rock's scholarly exploration report *The Amnye Ma-chhen Range and adjacent regions* (Rome 1956) concentrates on geography, history and anthropology, it includes informative chapters, especially on Labrang and Rakya monasteries during the 1920s as well as precious photographic documents on these and some other monastic sites. A history of Labrang, the other famous large monastery in northeastern Tibet, was published in Tibetan in 1987 (Lanzhou) and a richly illustrated Chinese booklet about the same site with an English synopsis came out in 1989 (Beijing). A comprehensive account of ca. 800 (!) monasteries has been published in Chinese as *Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Gansu and Qinghai Provinces* (Xining 1990). Various monographic studies were published in Tibetan in Xining after 1980, for example on Qutan or Rongwo monasteries (1982, 1986, 1988). A number of monuments in eastern Tibet were illus-

trated in the pictorial encyclopaedia *Buddhist Art of the Tibetan Plateau* (Hongkong 1988). The first modern guide-book to include the traditional provinces of Kham and Amdo (100 pages) is Gyurme Dorje's *Tibet Handbook* (Bath 1996).

Among the very few recent Western publications on specific sites in eastern and northeastern Tibet are several articles by the Tibetologist Amy Heller on eighth and ninth century temples and stone images in Kham (1994, 1997) and on the excavations at Dulan county in Qinghai Province where tombs, textiles, stone lions and minor decorative objects of the same early period were found between 1982 and 1985.

Since Tibet was opened to foreign visitors in 1980, several scholarly books and numerous articles have been published on its historical monuments in the central and western regions. Until these days its eastern parts, to which only relatively few people have had access so far, remained largely unknown. Andreas Gruschke has visited and thoroughly documented—often for the first time (at least after 1950)—many of these unknown sites, among them highly active monastic establishments with hundreds or even thousands of monks, or hidden treasures of Tibet's living and revitalized Buddhist tradition like a surprisingly large number of Jonangpa communities in present-day Amdo.

Thus the author has made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of Tibet's culture by his pioneering reference handbook of the religious and historical monuments in Amdo, one of the four main cultural provinces of traditional Tibet.

Michael Henss

Zürich, May 2000

Preface

Nothing is considered permanent in the unending cycle of life and death and the temples too undergo the cyclical change. The destruction of frescoes to create new ones is not considered to be a profane action. ... Thus the entire architecture of the temple is wholly subservient to the presence of the deity in the fresco image on the wall. The flight of the deity leads to the end of the old architecture and the creation of a totally new architecture. ... Tibetan painting and architecture has developed through time due to this process of the 'life' and 'death' of the temple room.

This process of demolition and re-erection had been going on for decades in Tibet.

Romi Khosla¹

My first encounter with Tibetans was in 1984, and it did not happen either in Europe or in Tibetan areas of the Himalayas, or in Tibet proper, but in deepest China. At that time I was studying Chinese in Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic, a country which is said to have entirely wiped out all traces of the Tibetan culture. A sightseeing trip to the Yungang Caves, one of the finest examples of ancient Buddhist grotto art, had brought me and some friends to the city of Datong. It is located in the northeastern part of the 'yellow earth', the loesslands, which is seen as the cradle of Chinese civilization. At that time Datong seemed to belong to another world, as it was still a place seldom visited by foreigners. As we were leaving we met two young men wearing heavy sheepskin coats. It was wintertime. Mao caps on their head, they were dressed in colourful fabrics. When they smiled some golden teeth glittered. For them also it must have been the first 'encounter of the third kind'. They just stood there and stared at us as we stared at them, wondering where they were from. All around us hundreds of Chinese stared, keenly interested both in us, the foreigners, and the Tibetans. We subsequently learned that to the Chinese the sight of Europeans was more alien than that of Tibetans. We spoke briefly to these people

from the 'roof of the world' and discovered that they too were on a sightseeing trip to Buddhist sites in China. They urged us to visit their country as well. This may have been the moment I first considered going to Tibet.

When I travelled to Tibet the following year, I did not believe that there would ever be a second chance to visit the 'roof of the world'. Like everybody else I was fascinated by my own pre-conceived image of Tibet, yet could not say why. I had heard of the Dalai Lama, I had seen several beautiful photos of the Potala Palace, of monasteries and mountain scenery. For me too Tibet was a mystical realm, a 'sacred country beyond the clouds', a country inhabited by a people believed to be predestined for the realization of a higher wisdom.

During my first visit to the highland my fascination grew stronger, and yet it became clear that in many ways the reality of the country and its people was different from what I had expected. The people stood firmly on a ground which for me, first stepping out of my car at an altitude of 5000 metres, seemed to sway. In monasteries where according to western imagination the sole preoccupation is the striving for enlightenment, I watched with pleasure how young monks played, joked, or teased each other.

Inside the temple halls, however, their lives seemed more solemn. Pilgrims wandering about were obviously deeply rooted in their faith, and yet in everyday life they behaved like other people, whether haggling in the market or participating in festivities. They seemed a bit more charming though, more relaxed and open-minded.

I was fortunate first to become acquainted with Tibet and its people at a time when Tibetan culture was alive. I do not, as many would, add the tiny, yet significant word—still. After more than two dozen journeys I prefer the word—again. Tibetan culture is alive, and thrives. The suffering and destruction of the Cultural Revolution, which cannot be considered as a Chinese matter alone, is common knowledge. So is the common presentation of the current state of Tibetan civilization. As political issues tend to overshadow all others, we cannot deal with them here. My main concern in this book is present-day Tibetan culture which often is said to be in its death-throes. Although I too realize that Tibetans still have to struggle for their culture and identity, this is a universal problem, and not only a Tibetan one. And I believe Tibetans are succeeding. Although I oppose the common view that Tibetan culture is nearly extinct in Tibet proper, this is not meant as a political statement, but rather as the expression of my admiration and respect for what the Tibetans have accomplished within the last decades.

It would be extremely unfair to the Tibetans to declare their culture doomed in its homeland. Their accomplishments in rebuilding monasteries, restructuring the economy and revitalizing the traditional way of life are among the most fascinating recent events in Asia. This would have been impossible without important modifications in Chinese policies, although these have created some new problems, some of which are those of a modern world and as such not likely to be stopped at the threshold of the snowland. Tibetans therefore have the task of reconciling the traditional and the modern, and they are coping. This also means that Tibet has recovered its traditions and that Tibetans have returned to many of their old habits and customs as will be evident from the areas described in this book. This is after all a basic necessity for the inhabitants of the ‘roof of the world’, enabling their ability to self expression in their own unequivocal way. Consequently, the land of Tibet is rich in cultural monuments which, as must be noted, are not only defined by their an-

tiquity. In the Buddhist view nothing is permanent, everyone and everything undergoes the cyclical change of destruction and renewal; the revived Tibetan culture must also be viewed in this way.

It was therefore high time to take stock of what is left in Tibet. Michael Henss' volume *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* (1981, in German) was the beginning of a detailed evaluation. Many researchers and scientists have since collected material and information permitting a deep insight into Tibetan culture, although much of this is limited to central Tibet. Yet, the Tibetan cultural realm stretches farther and includes areas with distinct features and customs. Many of these had never even been heard of, much less examined and analyzed. In presenting this study of the Cultural Monuments in northeastern and eastern Tibet, a variety of historical, economic or religio-philosophical aspects are therefore included in order to explain and evaluate the differences and the common features within the Tibetan cultural context. It is appropriate to include detailed descriptions of the current situation of the sites and, to a lesser extent, of the society. The first part of my study, published in two volumes will deal with the northeast, Amdo. Part II will deal with the east, Kham. For the purpose of differentiating from the better known ‘heart’ of Tibet, this will be referred to as central Tibet, and the areas covered here as northeast(ern) and east(ern) Tibet.

For Tibetans, the sacred is founded in hallowed places and objects, and not in long traditions, as opposed to the Western tendency to decry every loss of ancient things. This in effect means that cultural change is acceptable, and sometimes even expected. So it was that the sacred found its way back to the temples and monasteries, even though these are considered by western art historians to be less important than the older monuments. Due to the conservative nature of religious institutions, sacred art is generally viewed as being static. How different are the cultural monuments of eastern Tibet, symbols of the blossoming vitality of Tibetan civilisation, which, after decades of oppression, uses the changing political and social framework to assert itself, to flourish and develop further.

As described by Marc Dujardin² with respect to Bhutan, it was not common in Buddhist and other traditional societies to record aspects of material culture in general and of architecture in particular. Similarly, according to the Buddhist belief of the

transience of all forms of life, a character of eternity was not attributed to architectural monuments and artistic works. The cycle of life, death and (re)birth (*Sanskrit samsara*) of living beings is paralleled in the material world: in the continual architectural process of building, demolition and reconstruction.

It is this cycle of disintegration and reassembly which must be broken to create a total harmony which finally prevents the cycle from reforming.³

Thus this volume is not just a survey of the still existing antiquities in northeastern Tibet, of which, for various reasons, only a few remain. We have also considered many other monasteries which played an important historical role in both political, economic and social contexts. Here also the artistic development—architecture, painting, sculpture—in recent times must be considered, another expression of the vitality of Tibetan culture. Following the persecution and destruction, the religious and hence cultural revitalization is most impressive (with probably more than 3,000 monasteries and temples rebuilt on the entire plateau), and yet even those of us who are fascinated by the monastic culture sometimes become critical towards the socio-economic implications of such a monastic development. What we have today in northeastern and eastern Tibet, as in the entire country, is an immense variety of cultural developments, not all of which can be considered positive.

The current state of religious affairs in northeastern and eastern Tibet reflects the fact that cultural monuments are the material expression of a living cultural core, carried in the hearts of its people. Although this material expression may be severely damaged, or even destroyed, the core of the culture can be kept alive by those men and women who live this culture. Civilization does not die as long as the will exists to hand it down to future generations. Therefore it will always re-emerge at the opportune moment. Its temporary sacrifice may result in a rebirth:

The bodies of religious Tibet were sacrificed and resacrificed on multiple fronts for a three-decade period ... The sacrifice was not total,

however, for not only were the essential elements of Tibetan religiosity preserved in memories and emotions buried within the individual bodies of Tibetans - and even partially in hidden valleys where Tibetans continued to practice Buddhism throughout the period - but Tibetans also concealed in the earth of Tibet an unknown quantity of Buddha bodies...⁴

It is the unearthing of those Buddha bodies which marks the beginning of the religious revitalization. Yet, it was the enduring living culture borne in the minds and hearts which gave this revitalization a place to start. Careful observation has shown that the sacred landscape of Tibet has been *re-created*. But Tibetans do not only *recreate*, they dare to *reshape* their culture; therefore they live it instead of merely exhibiting it. This living culture, which combines both tradition and modernity, is the fascination all over Tibet, and especially in Amdo.

My work in this field in Amdo and Kham has been exciting and rewarding. Without the generous assistance and encouragement of a great number of people this work would never have borne fruit. No less significant was the friendly reception I experienced from the local people in the many places all over the Tibetan Plateau. I can unfortunately never adequately express the gratitude I feel towards them.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my Tibetan friends, both in exile and in Tibet, and to my Chinese friends. I am especially indebted to Michael Henss for the initiative, his suggestions and active involvement in the realization of this project. From his book arose our original plan for an outline of the cultural monuments in the whole of Tibet. Due to the wealth of the material it soon became obvious that a separate volume for eastern Tibet—Kham—would be necessary.

My thanks also to the editor for making it possible to present the two important regions of this part of Tibet, i.e. Amdo and Kham, in separate volumes.

Andreas Gruschke
Freiburg in May 2000

List of Abbreviations

- AP: Autonomous Prefecture
AZZ: *Aba Zangzu Qiangzu Zizhizhou Zhi* [Records of the Tibetan and Qiang nationalities' Autonomous Prefecture of Aba (Ngawa)]
CDCT: *Han-Zang Duizhao Cidian* [A Comparative Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary]
CMCR: Chinese Ministry of Cultural Relics
DCF: *Zhongguo Meishu Cidian* [Dictionary of Chinese Fine Arts]
DRM: *Zhongguo Ge Minzu Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Da Cidian* [Dictionary of Religion and Myths of Every Chinese Nationality]
ECF: *Zhongguo Meishu Quanji* [An Encyclopedia of Chinese Fine Arts]
GSM: *Gansu Shaoshu Minzu* [National Minorities of Gansu]
GZZG: *Gannan Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Southern Gansu]
HZHG: *Hualong Huizu Zizhixian Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Hui Autonomous County of Hualong]
HNZG: *Hainan Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Hainan]
HTZG: *Huzhu Tuzu Zizhixian Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Tu Autonomous County of Huzhu]
HZZG: *Huangnan Zangzu Zizhizhou Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Huangnan]
LAB: *Labulengsi Monastery* (book title)
MHT: *Minhe Huizu Tuzu Zizhi Xian Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Hui and Tu Autonomous County of Minhe]
MPR: Mongolian People's Republic
PRC: People's Republic of China
PRHA: *Anduo Zhengjiao Shi* [A Political and Religious History of Amdo]
QW 1994: *Qinghai Wenwu* [Qinghai Cultural Relics]
TAP: Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
TAR: Tibet Autonomous Region (Chin. *Xizang Zizhiqu*)
TCD: *rgya-bod ming mdzod - Zang-Han Cidian* [A Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary]
XSZX: *Xunhua Salazu Zizhi Xian Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Salar Autonomous County of Xunhua]
XZD: *Xizang Zizhiqu Dituce* [An Atlas of the Tibet Autonomous Region]
XZGK: *Xizang Zizhiqu Gaikuang* [A Survey of the Tibet Autonomous Region]
ZHCD: *rgya bod ming mdzod/ Zang Han Cidian* [Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary]

Introductory Notes

In Tibetan areas cultural relics are mostly of a religious nature, although this should not lead to the assumption that Tibetan culture is an entirely religious culture. Buddhism may play a major role in Tibetan society, as religion does in any traditional society, and religious belief of Tibetans may seem stronger than that of many other peoples, yet the people of Tibet have always been very rich in various customs and traditions which are not of a religious nature. The Tibetan oral folk-literature, handicrafts of daily life, ordinary housing, folk music offer beautiful examples of such secular culture.

However, religion, that is to say Tibetan Buddhism, is the most important factor when it comes to the remains of historic and restored cultural relics, as far as architecture, painting, sculpture, and so on are concerned. As the adoption of Buddhism had completely altered the superstructure of Tibetan society by setting up a new pattern of institutions, establishing a new class of political organization and of hierarchies of authority,¹ even relics originating in the political and social background of Tibetan society often have a religious touch.

Like in other areas of the Tibetan realm, Amdo also became politically organized by monasteries to the same extent as the complex hierarchy of lamas developed. Once the exigency of spreading the Buddhist doctrine throughout the country had been accepted,

it became imperative to create an elite which was initiated, disciplined and organised enough to spread the message... The monastery developed as the headquarters of this campaign and gradually a social system emerged whereby potential monks were recruited in childhood. ... Patronage of these monasteries gradually spread in Tibet to the rich landlords and aristocratic families who, by letting out their lands to tenants, were able to amass fortunes and share it with the monasteries.²

This is how the many great monasteries evolved, matured and spread across the country. As the lamas, their spiritual leaders, were most important both for managing religious affairs and influencing the people's everyday life, even politically, the institutions are therefore often designated after these lamas: lamaseries. The basic prerequisite for the flourishing of monasticism also carried the seeds of its demise, due to excessive development of the system, which brought religion, politics and social welfare into conflict. And the demise of important monasteries happened earlier and more rapidly, where there were competing political systems, like Muslim neighbours, legal bodies of Imperial China, and even Tibetan compatriots in culturally differing Amdo.

At the beginning of the 1980s the significance of Amdo, as far as Tibet's cultural history was concerned, was still severely underestimated. Khosla maintained that 'the centres of Tibetan life lie in the south'.³ In 1981 M. Henss⁴ wrote: 'The ... space of Ü (*dbUs*), Tsang and Kham became the most important centres of Tibetan cultural history.' Amdo was not even mentioned in this context, although it should be noted that Henss depicted an attitude which was the typical position of Tibetans of the core cultural areas. The actual situation in Amdo and the importance of its monastic centres was probably never much appreciated in central Tibet, because they did not interfere with politics in Tibet proper (*bod yul*).

This is all the more astounding since Amdowas were very well represented in lamaseries all over Tibet, notably in Lhasa's Drepung, Sera and Ganden monasteries. This is due to the circumstance that in modern sources people from Amdo are often mistaken as being people of Kham. Older Tibetan sources did not, at least until the 19th century, differentiate between those two eastern Tibetan 'provinces'. Rather they used the joint term *mdo khams*. It seems that where this term is used it was often

interpreted as Kham, thus neglecting a considerable Amdo part. So it is that the monks who initiated the Buddhist revival in central Tibet, such as Lu-me for instance, are often seen as having studied in Kham, although they were ordained and taught in Amdo.⁵

The anthropological, historical and therefore cultural background of Amdo differs in many respects from central Tibet. That is why the history of this region is often only peripherally the same as that represented by Lhasa chroniclers, and so we have to shed some light on historical developments in specific areas in northeastern Tibet. Although many historical facts can be seen from one aspect or the other, we sometimes have to interpret them in a way with which today's refugee Tibetan politicians may not feel comfortable. This must not be misunderstood as a plea in favour of absolute Chinese control, although

Tibet's system of ecclesiastical rule was fatally flawed by its dependence upon foreign political and military patronage. ...

China's sovereignty over Tibet has been internationally recognized both before and after 1951. The legalistic argument, which China can easily refute, has been emphasized at the expense of the self-determination argument, which China cannot answer. ...

It is one of the mysteries (some people may say tragedies) of the Tibetan case that its leaders in exile and their advisers have sought to show that Tibet has a right to absolute statehood, perhaps gambling to attract Western support, rather than to seek its people's right to decolonization. ...

The principle of self-determination is not dependent upon Tibet's historical or legal status. Tibet does not have to demonstrate an unbroken history of political independence in order to demand self-determination in the present.⁶

This notion is not the last word on all the political, social and economic problems on the Tibetan Plateau. The mystification of Tibetan history and the distortion of the multi-ethnic character of considerable parts of the Tibetan realm moves people to close their eyes to the possible consequences of a shift from Chinese imperialism to what may be a Tibetan one.

Our position in describing the situation in Amdo is neutral. Our sympathy will always be with the oppressed—be they Tibetans, Han-Chinese or Hui Muslims. It cannot be viewed as a political statement related to modern problems to have come to the conclusion that at a specific time the realm of Chinese or Tibetan control went as far as this region or that administrative border. This insight should be taken as a step towards a further understanding of historical, socio-cultural and ethno-political processes. These are critical and necessary for the solution of modern and post-modern political problems which are not as easily resolved as many of us often believe.

Tibet's best case is the whole truth, unobscured by fairy tale interpretations of the past or denials of the realities of the present.⁷

Tibet's Amdo region is extremely complex and only apparently homogenous. It is therefore difficult to elaborate a comprehensive plan to follow when presenting the different cultural areas of northeastern Tibet. The number of historic landscapes is too big, and they often do not coincide with tribal, natural or administrative borders. Due to the complexity which has persisted until modern times, neither is it feasible to arrange the present synopsis according to the historical development. The cultural mosaic of northeastern Tibet is too colourful to find an optimal solution. We have therefore used the current administrative organization of Tibet to draw a major delineation. It is much more strongly based on historical borderlines than is generally admitted, and this will help the reader to locate the sites in question more easily. That is to say, we have a tripartite arrangement of Amdo cultural relics in the present-day provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan, yet restricted to those areas which are considered as belonging to Amdo. The region of Kham, which also shares in the provinces of Qinghai and Sichuan, will, as stated, be dealt with in a separate volume.

The first visits to cultural monuments described (in this volume) took place in 1985, continuing to 2000, with some places visited only once and others several times. These descriptions provide both a view of conditions as found as well as setting these in a historic perspective, which has a long recorded background. Besides the interest of present readers, it is the author's hope that visitors to these remarkable sites may be able to assess and record progress and

change, thereby providing another link for future study, as the author has benefitted and built on all those who have preceded him in their dedication to Tibetan cultural development.

Here we start with the Qinghai part of Amdo, covering by far the largest area with monastic centres. Kumbum Jampa Ling is the first to be presented, the birthplace of the Tibetan Buddhist reformer Tsongkhapa and therefore of major cultural-historical importance. For a long period it was the only Amdo lamasery well known in the West. It is followed by four areas which can be naturally delineated: Tsongkha, Rongwo, Ngolok and the Kokonor-

Tsaidam Basin. Non-Buddhist relics are dealt with in a thematic chapter. Major examples are found in Qinghai; similar relics and monuments are also found in neighbouring provinces. In the second volume the Gansu area is described, starting with an examination of the situation in two geographically defined regions, the Silk Road margin and Kanlho; the major lamasery Labrang Tashi Chil merits a chapter. The Amdo section of Sichuan follows, disclosing several surprising features and monuments. The concluding chapter of volume 2 presents a survey of some cultural features which Tibet proper and Amdo have in common, or where they differ from each other.

Introduction to Tibet's Cultural Provinces Amdo and Kham

Part I. Northeast and Eastern Tibet Settlement Pattern and Current Political Divisions

The designation of Tibet as the realm of Tibetan culture and people ('ethnic Tibet') is, as far as its denotation is concerned, identical with 'Greater Tibet', which, according to the Chinese definition, is said to have come into being in 1950, to have covered the entire Tibetan Plateau at that time, and to have drawn attention to details of the region. The most important point is that, until the mid-1950s, the Tibetan Plateau was not even inhabited by a homogeneous population.

Expressed in modern terms, we would have to admit that Tibet, like China, Nepal, or India, and by virtue of its expanse over the entire plateau, has always been and still is multi-ethnic and multicultural. It is clear that the various peoples and cultures on the plateau were influenced and forged by the civilisations and political events of southern Tibet, China and Central Asia. Consequently we should, as members of modern states, be they pseudonationalistic or federal, try to perceive a culture from its centre, rather than from its boundaries. The appreciation of a cultural realm cannot be achieved from a political point of view, much less from a nationalistic one.

Tibetan culture has, like that of all other countries, expressed itself in a variety of forms. These cannot always be understood in relation to the linguistic, religious, historical, or socio-economic dimensions as what is considered the core of the culture, i.e. the Tibetan language, Buddhism, the empire of ancient times, or pastoralism. The frontiers of the country have their particular features that distinguish them from Tibet proper, and yet they have not been corrupted by the direct interference of a foreign regime. The reasons for this are manifold, the most important being the existence in former and present times of a specific local civilisation and the influx of cultural elements from outside. This makes it all

the more difficult to draw a more or less exact borderline between the Tibetan realm and its principal neighbours, i.e. Mongolia, Central Asia and—especially China.

Even the Chinese themselves do not have a clearly defined Tibet. They call merely the eastern part of the plateau 'Tibet' (Tibet), i.e. all those areas that are situated to the east of Lhasa, and belong to either the provinces of Kham or Amdo.¹ As the term 'people' actually means, one refers to the people of the former ruler of the Dalai Lamas, our definition has to be extended to include the complementary term Bochenpa (*bod chen pa*) or—than of Greater Tibet. As such it may be applied to the people of the central Tibetan provinces of Tsang and Lhotsha, Ngari and Ladakh in western Tibet, and to those ethnic Tibetan populations in several valley regions in the Himalayas as well as in Amdo and Kham, which are located in the plateau's northeast and east respectively.²

With respect to the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, the regions east and northeast of the Lhasa-dominated areas are called Do-Kham (*duo kham*). Amdo and Kham are generally considered to be the two Tibetan 'provinces' that make up eastern Tibet. These 'provinces' are seen from a Lhasa perspective as extending as far as the foot of the mountain ranges that frame the Tibetan Highland to the north and east, i.e. the geographical boundaries of the plateau. If this were so Amdo would be bordered in the north by the oases along the southern edge of the Mongolian Gobi; Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Zhangye and Wuwei. These old trade markets of the ancient Silk Road belonged to the Tibetan empire during the eighth and ninth centuries³ yet such a delimitation of ethnic Tibet is obviously questionable. Tibetans live in some zones of the Nan Shan mountains stretching on the border of China's Gansu and

Introduction to Tibet's Cultural Provinces

Amdo and Kham

Part 1. Northeast and Eastern Tibet Settlement Pattern and Current Political Divisions

The designation of Tibet as the realm of Tibetan culture and people ('ethnic Tibet') is, as far as its dimension is concerned, a highly ambiguous term. The general public believes the size of the 'political Tibet', which was *de facto* independent from 1914 to 1950, to have covered the natural entity of the Tibetan Plateau, 'geographical Tibet'. A careful attention to details quickly reveals the complexity of the region. The most extensive highland of the world, the Tibetan Plateau, has never been a political entity for a longer period of time, and most probably it was never inhabited by a homogenous population. Expressed in modern terms, we would have to admit that Tibet, like China, Nepal, or India, and by virtue of its expanse over the entire plateau, has always been and still is multi-ethnic and multicultural. It is clear that the various peoples and cultures on the plateau were influenced and formed by the civilisations and political events of southern Tibet, China and Central Asia. Consequently we should, as members of modern states, be they pseudo-nationalistic or federate, try to perceive a culture from its centre, rather than from its boundaries. The appreciation of a cultural realm cannot be achieved from a political point of view, much less from a nationalistic one.

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the more difficult to draw a more or less exact borderline between the Tibetan realm and its principal neighbouring cultures, the Himalayan states, and—due to a very long shared history—especially China.

One ethnically but not geographically defined Tibet is: those regions whose inhabitants call themselves Böpa (*bod pa*), speak Bökhe (*bod khas*), i.e. all Tibetan dialects related to that spoken in Lhasa, who use the Tibetan script and belong to either the Bön religion or Tantric Buddhism.¹ As the term Böpa, strictly speaking, only refers to the people of the former realm of the Dalai Lamas, our definition has to be extended to include the complementary term Böchenpa (*bod chen pa*) or—man of Greater Tibet. As such it may be applied to the people of the central Tibetan provinces Ü, Tsang and Lhokha, Ngari and Ladakh in western Tibet, and to those ethnic Tibetan populations in several valley regions in the Himalayas as well as in Amdo and Kham, which are located in the plateau's northeast and east respectively.²

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Qinghai provinces,³ but they can hardly be considered as the main population of the Silk Road oases; in some areas there are none at all.

The Chinese province of Qinghai is generally identified with the greater part of Amdo. This Tibetan term, however, refers to an area stretching far into the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Gansu and Sichuan. Moreover, Tibetans consider the Qinghai-administered regions of Yushu and Nangchen as belonging to Kham. Kham reaches further north in the inner part of the plateau than in the east, whereas Amdo occupies some areas in northern Sichuan province. Historical reasons may play an essential role in the distinction of what is a part of Amdo and what belongs to Kham. For general purposes it is useful to look at the river systems which dominate the two areas.⁴

Although maps on the Do-Kham region tend to show some indistinct borderlines, it can be easily recognized that Amdo mainly comprises the river system of the Ma Chu—as the Yellow River is called by Tibetans—and of its tributaries that join the stream before reaching Gansu's capital Lanzhou. Kham, on the other hand, occupies that part of the Tibetan Plateau that is characterized by deep gorges cut by China's largest river, the Chang Jiang or Yangzi Jiang (Yangtze; Dri Chu in Tibetan) and its tributaries like the Yalong Jiang (Nya Chu), as well as the Southeast Asian rivers Mekong (Dza Chu) and Salween (Nag Chu).

This is a rough outline of how the two areas could be distinguished from each other, although the Ngawa (Chin. *Aba*) area makes it obvious that the river systems cannot be taken as an absolute criterion. The rivers of that area drain south into the Yangtse system although they belong to Amdo in the north. The main reason for this may be the ethnic structure of that region: the Ngawa Prefecture is populated by members of the Ngolok-Seta tribes and therefore has close relations with the famous Ngoloks who live in the adjacent area of Amnye Machen, Amdo's most famous sacred mountain.

The absence of distinct borderlines indicates that Amdo and Kham, or rather Do-Kham, are not and may never have been provinces in an administrative sense.⁵ As they exhibit some distinct features which distinguish them not only from central Tibet but also from each other, we should rather speak of Amdo and Kham in the sense of 'cultural or geographical

provinces' of Tibet. During the 18th century, Amdo even created the impression of being at least relatively autonomous, if not independent.

From the states of Hor and Amdoa no soldiers are taken, from motives of distrust, as the first are adherents of the Tatar rather than the Tibetan cause, and usually speak the Tatar language, while the second dwell on the confines of China beyond the Great Wall, and speak more Tibetan than Tatar and Chinese.⁶

On the other hand, had Amdo and Kham been under the Dalai Lama's secular and not only spiritual rule, the extent of his incumbency would still have seemed to be quite unclear; central Tibetans of the 18th century seemed to be very ignorant about the location and extension of Amdo:

The King of Tibet is also ruler over the state of Amdoa, mentioned above, which is bounded on the east by China, on the north by Kokonor and Chang, on the west by Kham, and on the south by Tonquin, Pegu, or Siam, as far as is known; but this is not known for certain, as the Tibetans have very little knowledge of those countries and the states neighbouring them.⁷

Whatever the political relationship between Lhasa and Amdo may have been, it can certainly be noted that throughout a very long period of Tibetan history Amdo was a region on the Tibetan Plateau that was felt to be quite different from central Tibet:

In my time nearly all the lecturers and lamas of the university, masters of the Supreme Lama, and the Grand Lamas who have been born again, came from Amdoa, a province from which they do not draft soldiers, as mentioned above. (...) Notwithstanding the (...) blameable habits of the Tibetans, they have some good points, among which, being generally intelligent (although not equal to the people of the state of Amdoa, who are extremely quick), they are gentle and humane and amenable to reason.⁸

Administratively, the Do-Kham territory seems to have been torn apart and distributed among modern China's Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR, Chin. *Xizang zizhiqu*) and the four Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. This 'dismantling' of Tibet, especially of the Do-Kham region, is usually attributed to the Communist government of

the People's Republic of China, founded in 1949. This is not quite correct, as the administrative pattern had already been created during the Chinese Empire and the Republican era. Details of the historical development will be illustrated in the section on Amdo, and, in a separate volume, on Kham. However, the divisional character, the disunity and particularism in Amdo is a reality that is accepted even by Tibetan scholars: 'The Amdowa had never been ruled by any one leader as a united people ever since the fall of the Tibetan empire in the ninth century A.D.'⁹

The area of Amdo forms part of three present-day Chinese provinces. It occupies the bulk of Qinghai, the southwestern edge of Gansu and the northernmost grasslands of Sichuan. Historically it comprises the former kingdoms and tribal areas of Chone (*cōnē*) and Thewo (*the bo*), the Ngolok (*mgo lok*), Thrika (*khri kha*) and Shara Yugur (*'ban dha hor*) as well as the Tsaidam (*tshva i 'dam*) and Hor Gyadé (*hor rgya sde*) regions, the Tsongkha (*tsong kha*) and Rongwo (*rong po*) valleys and those of their tributaries, as well as the monastic state of Labrang. Nowadays the administrative divisions take the ethnic structure of the population into account. That is why one finds the Haibei, Huangnan, Hainan, Ngolok and Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (AP) and the Haixi Mongol-Tibetan-Kazakh AP in Qinghai, Gannan TAP and Tianzhu (*then kru'u*, or *gling chu gser khab*) Tibetan Autonomous County (AC) in Gansu besides Ngawa (*lnga pa*, Chin. *Aba*) Tibetan-Qiang AP in Sichuan province. The Ngawa Prefecture only partly belongs to Amdo, while the bigger part, together with the Kandse TAP, is considered to make up the east of Kham.

The western part of Kham consists more or less of what is now the Chamdo district of the TAR, while northern Kham lies in Qinghai's Yushu TAP, and its southernmost part in Sichuan's Muli Tibetan AC

and Dechen TAP of the province of Yunnan. In terms of history and Tibetan tribes, Kham comprises the realm of the former Nangchen kingdom (*nang chen*) in the north, Nubhor (*nub hor*), Poyül (*spo yul*), Chamdo (*chab mdo*), Drayab (*'brag yab*), Pashö (*dpag shod*), Dzayül (*rdza yul*), Tsha(wa)rong (*tsha ba rong*) and Markham (*smar khams*) areas in the west; centrally located are the former kingdoms of Lhatog (*lha thog*), Dege (*sde dge*), Ling (*gling*), Te Hor (*tre hor*), Ba (*'ba'*) and Lithang (*li thang*) and Kyenarong (*sKye nag rong*); Gyethang (*rgyal thang*) and Muli (*rmi li*) lie to the south. While Lhasa Tibetans, especially authorities of the government in exile, tend to include Minyag (*mi nyag*), Gyarong (*rgyal mo rong*), the Qiang mountain areas of Min Shan (*byang*, in Sichuan) and the Naxi-Moso-Pumi regions around Lake Lugu and the Lijiang Naxi AP (*lho 'jang sa tham*, in Yunnan) within Kham province, the populations of those areas have their own perception of where they do or do not belong. From an anthropological point of view they live in the circumference of ethnic Tibet, i.e. they are the same Bönpo or Tantric Buddhists as the Tibetans, or at least have been influenced by Tibetan culture, but they speak their own language.¹⁰ Some of them even have their own specific script.

We have to accept that no province of Kham existed as a distinct area under a certain district government with jurisdiction over its land and population. Until the 20th century most western regions of Kham were governed by officials of the Dalai Lama. There was a subsequent change from absolutely independent little kingdoms in the north and in the heart of the region to the semi-dependent principalities further east up to the Chinese controlled areas in the bordering mountains. The concept of Kham was not a province but rather a loose federation of tribal states, kingdoms and dependant districts.¹¹ The same is true for Amdo.

2. Amdo

Generally speaking, the Amdo region comprises all those areas which are situated fully within the precincts of the Ma Chu River drainage area—as the upper reaches of the Yellow river are called in Tibetan. Most of those regions belong to the present-day Chinese province of Qinghai. We may consider the watershed between Ma Chu and Dri Chu (Tibetan name of the upper reaches of the Yangtse river) to be Amdo's natural boundary in the south. To the west extend the highlands of Yarmothang and Changthang across which the Drogpa ('brog pa), Tibetan nomads, wander with their flocks of yaks and sheep. The Kunlun ranges make up the mountainous barrier to the deserts of the Tsaidam Basin where, ethnically, a Mongolian environment begins. Parts of the Tsaidam Basin and the vast stretches of the Changthang near the headwaters of Ma Chu and Dri Chu are almost uninhabited.¹²

On the very north of the Tibetan Plateau the mountain ranges of Nan Shan or Qilian Shan drop off to the Inner Asian desert regions. Once more we find Tibetans living in the higher areas, while in the densely populated northeast of Qinghai there is a high degree of ethnic mixing. The river valley of the Huang Shui, a Yellow River tributary, is a natural gateway to Tibet. Hence it is an ethnic patchwork of Tibetans (about one million in Amdo), Tu or Monguor (approx. 200,000 persons), Hui Muslims (0.6 million in Qinghai and approximately 0.4 million within Tibetan areas of Gansu province), Salar (90,000), Mongolians (60,000), Bao'an (12,000), Dongxiang (150,000 to 240,000) and Han-Chinese (59.7 % of the Qinghai populace). The mountainous rim of the plateau's north and northwest is populated by Yugur (13,000), Kazakhs (3,000), and Uyghurs (in Xinjiang), living side by side with Hui, Mongolians, Tibetans and Han-Chinese.¹³

As is the case in all Tibetan regions, the population of Amdo is also composed of peasants and itinerant herdsmen. Most of the arable land is concentrated in the eastern part. This is where the big monastic centres of the so-called Yellow Hat sect developed: the Valley of Onions—Tsongkha, with the monastic university Kumbum Jampa Ling which recalls the great Lamaist reformer Tsongkhapa; the monastic centres of Labrang and Chone situated in

the southwestern part of Gansu province; Rongwo valley, home to the remarkable Wutun or Rebgong art. One must not forget Rgolung, the centre of the religious activities of the Tu people who spread the Tibetan form of Buddhism in both eastern Tibet and China proper.

The Tibetans share all those fertile and climatically favourable domains with other sedentary peoples: the Salar Muslims, who immigrated into the Ma Chu Canyon of Lower Amdo (around Xunhua) during the Chinese middle ages; the Hui, who started to settle on the eastern precincts in the 15th or 16th centuries; and especially the Han-Chinese, who in 121 BC founded their first military base near Xining, today's capital of Qinghai province. The mountains of the northeastern fringe of the Tibetan Plateau, i.e. the border regions of the Chinese provinces of Qinghai and Gansu, are still populated by Tibetans. Together with some dispersed and numerically few peoples—like the Old-Mongolian Monguor (Tu) in Huzhu and Datong counties, the Dongxiang (250,000 persons) and Bao'an (just about 9,000 people)—the Tibetans are a big minority, while neighbouring central Gansu is inhabited entirely by Hui and Han-Chinese.

The nomads among the Amdowas, as Amdo Tibetans call themselves, are easily outnumbered by their farming countrymen, and yet their living space extends over the largest expanse of Qinghai. South of the Kunlun Mountains, in the vast grasslands of Yarmothang and around Lake Kokonor, as well as around the holy mountain of Amnye Machen, their way of life is determined by the itinerant herdsmen. The vast steppes and the harsh climate of the highlands, not suited to agriculture or forests, offer a living to itinerant cattle-breeders only. However, there is again, as in former times, plenty of wildlife. In the vast open space hunting was difficult before the introduction of rifles;¹⁴ today certain species are protected by law. While the southern parts of Amdo undoubtedly are the incontestable realm of the Tibetan Ngolok-Seta tribes, the prairies and desert areas within and around the Tsaidam basin were taken possession of by Mongolian tribes, starting in the 13th century. Even to the far west of the barren Changthang region and south of Rongwo, Mongo-

lian tribes of herdsmen are still to be found. Originally all those nomadic tribes only bred sheep and yaks;¹⁵ later they also started to keep goats, cattle and, of course, horses.

2.1. Derivation of the toponym 'Amdo'

The meaning of a province named Amdo has not yet been found in any of the early Tibetan sources. After the collapse of the ancient Yarlung dynasty in 842 AD, the process of political centralization came to an end and the Tibetan Empire broke up. It was the first and last empire covering the entire Tibetan Plateau and beyond. Political fragmentation was continually resisted by the attempts at regional unification by aristocratic families and even monastic rulers. Kingdoms, tribal lands and tiny principalities co-existed in medieval Tibet up to modern times and offered a large variety of social and political structures.¹⁶ Thus there was no specific administrative divisional pattern in the Tibetan realm, much less well-defined provinces of a centralized government. Even though the government of the 5th Dalai Lama and his successors, especially the 13th Dalai Lama, tried to follow in the footsteps of the emperors of the 7th to 9th centuries, there was no administrative re-organization of Tibet.

The Dalai Lamas had created a centralized administration modelled after the Yarlung realm, and even intended to restore its territory to the former extent of this realm. Although the aims and the prototype after which the policy was modelled might be called imperial(ist),¹⁷ they did not lead to an organizational pattern adopting provincial divisions. We find districts (*rdzong*), autocratic sedentary and tribal kingdoms throughout the country's history, but no regular legal body on a subdivisional (provincial) level of a centralized government. This is why we suggest the designation 'cultural provinces' for toponyms like Ü, Tsang, Amdo and Kham. As we shall see, defining their delimitations was always rather vague, so that errors and misconceptions concerning the affiliation of smaller areas to one of these 'provinces' are quite common.¹⁸

While the designations Amdo and Kham have become widely used in modern times, it is less known that until the 19th century Tibetan sources only used the composite Tibetan term Do-Kham. As *mdo khams* it may be found in Tibetan, as *duo gansi* in Chinese sources, starting in the Mongol-Chinese Yuan dynasty (1274-1368).¹⁹ Eastern Tibet, i.e. the

region beyond the central Tibetan provinces of Ü and Tsang, is then generally referred to as Do-Kham Gang-sum (*mdo khams sgang sum*), or Do-Kham Gang-drug (*mdo khams sgang drug*): that is to say the 'three, or six, mountains [of] mDo [and] Kham'.²⁰ The term *sgang* is meant to designate the pasture grounds on the high upland between the great river systems of Salween, Mekong, Yangtse, Yalong Jiang, and their tributaries.²¹ As a toponym Do-Kham thus seems to represent a comprehensive concept of the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau or realm, as is stated in Das' *Tibetan-English Dictionary*:

[*mdo khams*] *Mdo* and *Khams*, indicates Amdo, the province of Tibet S.E. of Kökō Nor, and Kham.²²

By contrasting various sources we may discern that both terms, Amdo and Kham, or rather *mdo* and *khams*, are concurrently used to circumscribe a deficiently delineated East Tibet. Southeastern Tibet, for instance, was sometimes either called Do-me (*mdo smad*) or Kham, both being 'a vague geographical term without definite political significance' (Teichman).²³ Ren and Tshe-dbang rdo-rje alike use the term Do-Kham as 'a reference to the whole Tibetan-populated area east of Kong-po and Nag-chu'.²⁴ That is to say, it includes all the regions embraced by the modern toponyms Amdo, Kham and Gyarong, plus some minor adjacent regions.

We should moreover note that in former times the designation Do-Kham Gang-sum (or -drug) was used to distinguish Lhasa-dominated areas of central Tibet from those parts of the plateau that are characterized by:

1. The river system of the Ma Chu and its tributaries that reach the stream before Gansu's capital Lanzhou.
2. That part of the Tibetan Plateau that is characterized by deep gorges cut by China's largest river, the Yangtse (Dri Chu in Tibetan) and its tributaries like Yalong Jiang (Nya Chu), as well as the Southeast Asian rivers Mekong (Dza Chu) and Salween (Nag Chu).

Within this context it is interesting to note that Lama Tsenpo in his Tibetan geography of the early 19th century distinguishes between the people of Khams and Mongolia (*sog*) and Tibetans of the Ü-Tsang (*dbus gtsang*) region. He also speaks of the countries of Mdo-Khams and Mongolia.²⁵ The Tibetan scholar Gedün Chömpel (*dge 'dun chos*

'phel) even went as far as to interpret *khams* as ‘borderland’, which was and is indeed true, compared to the central Tibetan provinces.²⁶

We should, therefore, look at Amdo and Kham in the sense of being cultural or geographical provinces of Tibet, as they were not individually defined by the toponym Do-Kham alone, but rather as areas beyond Ü-Tsang.

Toponyms are often assigned according to a topographical situation or geographical features, not only in Tibet. Therefore, the meaning of a word in a specific language may hint at the significance of an area within a certain cultural complex. Ancient Tibetan scholars ordinarily made tripartite subdivisions of large cultural and geographical regions. The main areas were called upper, lower and middle parts of the country, with the core civilization as the middle part, the upper one being situated to the west and the lower one to the east.²⁷ As the Tibetan term *mdo* also refers to lower lands, namely the lower part of a valley where it merges into the plain,²⁸ it thus looks as if the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau was originally just called *mdo*.²⁹

After the military expansion of the Tubo Empire of the Yarlung dynasty (7th to 9th centuries) the Tibetan realm went even beyond regions traditionally inhabited by Tibetans. The distinction of outlying districts from the Tibetan heartland, which of course was the middle region (*dbus*),³⁰ was often made according to the categories of upper (*stod*) and lower (*smad*) areas. Consequently, the term for eastern Tibet used after the Tubo Empire was not Do-Kham but rather Do-me (*mdo smad*) and Do-tö (*mdo stod*),³¹ as it was further subdivided into a lower and an upper part. More confusion arises from the fact that some works divide Amdo in two sections, an upper (*mdo stod*) and a lower Amdo (*mdo smad*). Upper Amdo then is considered to comprise the headwaters of the river Ma Chu, its upper reaches and the grounds above and north of it, including the basin of Lake Kokonor and as far to the east as the Datong River, the valley of the Huang Shui down to its outlet into the Yellow River. Lower Amdo consequently lies to the east and southeast of the Ma Chu, between the river Tao He and the Min Shan mountain range.³²

Yet, if *mdo* in its meaning of lower part in the Tibetan cultural context also may indicate the eastern part, the above-mentioned additional subdivision

takes on another meaning: upper east (*mdo stod*) for the vast highland steppes of the northeast, and lower east (*mdo smad*) designating the deep-cut valleys and high mountain ranges in the southeast of the Tibetan Plateau. It is the latter which became known in the West by its modern name of Kham (*khams*). However, this very *khams* later became, as we have seen, part of the designation *mdo khams*.³³

The Tibetan word *khams* has a number of different meanings, of which here those of empire, realm, territory or world seem to be the most significant.³⁴ With *yul khams* interpreted as a political territory or empire,³⁵ and *rgyal khams* as a kingdom, an expression like *mdo khams* may also be taken, at least originally, as ‘the lower world, the territory of the lowlands’. In a central Tibetan perspective, those lower or eastern regions were border areas, completing Ü-Tsang to form a ‘Greater Tibet’ (*bod chen*). Technical terms at the beginning, the words *mdo* and *khams* have only recently turned into separate toponyms.³⁶

Lama Tsenpo (*bla ma btsan po*, died in 1839) in his reference work—the only comprehensive Tibetan geography—refers to what nowadays is called Amdo by the term *Mdo-smad A-mdö*,³⁷ i.e. the lower *mDo Amdo*. The eastern part of Changthang, called Yarmothang by the Amdowas, is represented as *mDo-Kham Yarmothang*. The latter is regarded by Lama Tsenpo as being a section of Amdo.³⁸ Even 19th century Tibetan use of the terms Amdo and Kham does not bring us any further.

So, why should the northeast of Tibet as a geographical or cultural entity be called Amdo? According to Hermanns,³⁹ there is a steep rock on the northern slope of the Bayankara Mountains, somewhere near the headwaters of the Ma Chu. It is said that a natural formation resembling the Tibetan letter A is found on that rock. Near there, the river leaves the mountains, flowing into a wider valley, and as such a river outlet in Tibetan is called *mdo* the name of Amdo may be explained as the ‘[Ma Chu] river outlet near the A-shaped rock formation’.

2.2. A historical sketch of Tibet’s Amdo region

As the northeastern part of the Tibetan Highland has distinct natural, ethnic and geographic features, it may be worthwhile to take a short look at the historical development of Amdo. The Amdowas,

Tibetans of Amdo, are said to consider themselves as Böchenpa (*bod chen pa*), people of 'Greater Tibet', in contrast to those of 'Little Tibet', Böchung (*bod chung*). According to Hermanns,⁴⁰ Tibetan tribes of Amdo regard themselves as the proper and eldest Bö (*bod*) while Tibetans of central and western Tibet are thought to be their descendants. This view does not seem unfounded, especially when considering early proto-Tibetan immigration. The Tibetan tribes of Amdo can be closely associated to the Qiang (Wade-Giles spelling: Ch'iang) peoples of old Chinese records. Beginning in the first millennium BC, parts of those Qiang tribes gradually migrated from Central Asia onto the Tibetan Highland. Passing through the valleys of northeastern Tibet, they thus first spread in Amdo and gradually continued to take possession of southern and western Tibet.⁴¹

Those Qiang of course mixed with autochthonous tribes present and with peoples who subsequently invaded Tibet. Under these circumstances it can hardly be possible to trace a kind of original *bod*-people with a root common to all Tibetan tribes. Lama Tsenpo, too, who—at the beginning of the 19th century—had composed the only all-comprehensive geography of Tibet en toto, also expresses his doubts:

As for the (origin of) the people of the country of Tibet, it is difficult to make a decision, because they are explained by the Tibetans as having been produced from a monkey (...) Among the kings, ministers, and translators of Tibet in former times, there were Khu, Zo, Dpang, G-yung, Rma, and others; and there were Chinese and many famous tribes (rus) of Hor, such as Sa-ri, Gru-gu, Di-mir, Shi-ri, and others; therefore it is not certain that there was (only) one racial origin (rus dang chad khungs).⁴²

The ancient Chinese term Qiang covers all the nomads of the regions west of China and might have been derived from the old Tibetan word '*Jang*' (pronounced Djang). The Chinese character for Qiang carries the symbols for 'man' and 'sheep' which can easily be interpreted as 'men leading sheep to pasture', i.e. stock-farming nomads. During the early Shang period of Chinese history (2nd millennium BC) those western neighbours of old China settled in an area stretching from Shanxi in northern China's loess highlands through Gansu to northern Sichuan. Chinese mythology has it that Qiang were involved in

overthrowing the Shang dynasty and establishing the power of Zhou dynasty. The early or rather proto-Tibetans have most likely played a major role in the formation of the Chinese⁴³ civilization of antiquity.⁴⁴

After the establishment of China's first imperial dynasty—by another kingdom that had its roots in the 'Barbarian West'—the genesis of the Han-Chinese identity brought the agriculturally based Chinese Empire again into conflict with pastoral tribes at its western border, especially with the Xiongnu who virtually ruined the state by the tributes they got in exchange for peace. This was the reason why Han Emperor Wudi (140-67 BC) started his military campaigns which ended in the conquest not only of the bordering regions but of all the Tarim Basin in present-day Xinjiang. When the Qiang-Tibetans threatened the newly opened trade routes to Middle Asia, they were repelled by a well-equipped Chinese army in 62-60 BC. A first military outpost of the Han dynasty had already been established near today's Xining in 121 BC. From there the Chinese started the colonization of the area between the Yellow River and Lake Kokonor.⁴⁵

At the beginning of the Tang dynasty's rule of China, Tibetans were called Tubo, a term that seems to be derived from *tu phod* or *stod bod* (upper Tibet).⁴⁶ The archaic Tibetan dialects of Amdo have retained the articulation of the medieval Tibetan language; as such the pronunciation is *Töwöd*, as in Mongolian tongue. Thus, the term was handed down as *Tübiüt* in Turkish diction, *Tibbat* in Arabic and passed on as *Tibet* in Western languages. As in Chinese annals *tu phod* or *stod bod* was represented as *Tubo*, the character reading *bo* may also be pronounced *fan* (which in the West is usually translated as 'barbarian', but actually means 'foreign'), later the Chinese pronunciation *Tufan* became generally adopted.⁴⁷ Therefore in old travelogues we can also find Chinese expressions like *Sifan* and *Hsifan* (*Xifan* in Pinyin spelling). These were interpreted as western barbarians and included the Tibetans of Amdo. Furthermore the Turko-Mongol word *Tangut* was originally used for Tibetans in general, yet specifically referred to the Amdowas, as northeastern Tibet is the area of permanent contact and exchange between all those peoples around the pivot of China, Tibet, Mongolia and the Inner Asian Silk Road.

Although Amdo had long been the realm of the proto-Tibetan Qiang, they did not fully occupy the region throughout the last two thousand years. When

in central Tibet the ruler King⁴⁸ Songtsen Gampo started to build up a Greater Tibetan Empire, several other kingdoms existed in the northeastern part of the plateau, like those of Minyag, Sumpa and Tuyuhun. Chinese named dynasties like the Early Qin (351-394 AD), Late Qin (384-417) and Late Liang (386-403) obscure the fact that the ruling bodies of those principalities and kingdoms were proto-Tibetan.⁴⁹ Besides that, the fringe of the Tibetan Plateau always tended to offer retreat to ethnic populations who came under pressure from large-scale migrations of neighbouring peoples or for political reasons.

One such example is the Yugurs of the Gansu-Qinghai borderland on the northern slope of the Tibetan Highland. Beginning in the middle of the 9th century, the Central Asian Uyghurs (Chinese *Huihu*), originally inhabiting the Orkhon valley of Mongolia, increasingly came under pressure because of internal struggles for power and due to natural disasters. They therefore started to move in waves in a western direction where they set up the Uyghur kingdom of the Turpan Basin. They also settled along the oases of the Hexi-corridor in Gansu where they built up a Ganzhou Khanate. After a war against the developing Tangut Kingdom of Xi Xia in the mid-11th century, the Hexi-Uyghurs became vassals of the latter kingdom and mixed with neighbouring populations—thus finally forming a Yugur nationality. After the destruction of Xi Xia by the Mongols in 1227 and during the decline of the Yuan-Chinese Empire (1274-1368) conflicts started among the local feudal lords which finally drove the Yugurs to the mountainous region (Qilian Mts. or Nan Shan) that separates Amdo from Central Asian deserts.⁵⁰

On the eve of the Mongolian assault under Chenggis Khan's leadership, Amdo to some extent formed part of the Northern Song dynasty's empire: especially the area around Xining and the region between the Yellow River section near Gonghe (Jishi Jun) and Lower Amdo's Taozhou district. Amdo's northern part—from Lanzhou westward along the Qilian Mountain Range—belonged to the Tangut Empire of Xi Xia.⁵¹ The latter's disastrous defeat by the troops of Chenggis Khan had quickly brought the whole of Tibet under Mongolian control. The total destruction of any unyielding enemy was too horrifying to have permitted the organization of any resistance. Present-day Tu (the so-called Monguor)⁵² and Dongxiang national minorities are said to be the

last vestiges of the former population of Xi Xia, and they are supposed to have intruded into the Datong-Huzhu-Linxia area after the defeat by Chenggis Khan in 1226-1227.⁵³

The conquest of the Amdo area was started in 1226 by Subudei, one of Chinggis Khan's greatest commanders, who invaded the Tsongkha area on his way to Lanzhou. In 1275, i.e. soon after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, another Mongol army invaded Amdo to fight the impetuous Tufan-Tibetans, whose nomad pastures extended in the Lake Kokonor area. A war raged for half a century within the Tsongkha region around Xining. Therefore the small Tibetan tribes living there had to flee the country and leave it to the invading Mongolians.⁵⁴

During the Yuan dynasty of the Mongol-Chinese Empire, Muslim tribes of Samarkand in western Turkestan migrated eastward. Under the guidance of a mullah they reached the upper reaches of the Yellow River and settled in the valleys around the present-day Xunhua area (Tib. Dowi, *rdo sbis*). Tradition has it that a legendary camel carried bags full of earth from their home which were mixed with earth around a 'Camel Spring'. There the camel turned to stone, and the tribe's long migration came to an end. Since the 14th century they occupied that small section of the Yellow River gorge around Xunhua, and the Salar, as this Muslim population is called, shared their environment with Tibetans living high up in the mountains, together with Hui Muslims and Han-Chinese. The language they speak corresponds to Chaghatai-Turkish, but not surprisingly includes a lot of Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese loan-words.⁵⁵

Long after the end of the Mongol-Chinese Yuan dynasty (1368), political and ethnic unrest on the Inner Mongolian Ordos Plateau induced the first Mongolian groups to move further southwest. Headed by Ibulas, these tribes reached the shores of Lake Kokonor in 1509, ravaging the people living in the grassland area around it. In 1566 they were strengthened by the hordes of Setsen Gung, and in 1573 finally by Altan Khan. Reinforcements from Mongolia continued to come, as Ligdan Khan (1592-1634), since 1604 prince of the Chakhar tribes in Inner Mongolia, tried again to establish a Great Khanate modelled after the example of Chenggis and Khubilai Khan. Because of his repressive actions, most of the Mongolian tribes rebelled against him. In 1631-32 Ligdan's last punitive expedition

against the Aru Khorchin in the southeast of Inner Mongolia brought about the devastating response of the emerging Manchu Empire. After gathering the remaining followers around him Ligdan had to flee westward. A trek of 100,000 people, including women and children, moved across the Ordos into Amdo. The Mongolian tribes took possession of the Kokonor area and, strengthened by other groups of Khalkha Mongols, made their way farther south to the headwaters of the Ma Chu (Yellow River).⁵⁶

Thus arose a Mongolian kingdom in the Kokonor area that was formally established by Gushri Khan in 1633. He belonged to the Khoshot Mongols, a sub-tribe of the Oirats, and traced his origins to the younger brother of Chenggis Khan. In 1636 Gushri Khan invaded Kham, the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, six years later he conquered central Tibet, eradicating the local kingdoms there. In 1641 he assigned the whole country to the 5th Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatsho (1617-1680) and thus helped to establish the Tibetan theocracy. The support of the Mongolian princely dynasty of Amdo for the Lamaist take-over of autocratic power in Tibet was substantial.⁵⁷

Possibly in the course of the warfare between Mongolian and Chinese armies during Ming dynasty's Wanli reign (1573-1620), a Chinese army unit named 'secure the peace' (*bao'an*) was established in Amdo's Rongwo valley. Under the command of Gansu's Hezhou (today's Linxia district in Gansu) military commission a town of Bao'an developed. Its inhabitants mixed with Tibetans, Hui and Mongolians of the surrounding area and thus developed distinct features of an ethnic population of its own—the Bao'an. As both the Ming and Qing dynasties of the Chinese Empire supported the development of the Lamaist monasteries in Amdo as an effort to pacify the region, the feudal power of Rongwo's main monastery grew to an extent that during the Tongzhi reign (1862-74) of the Qing dynasty the Bao'an started to move towards the northeast. First they established themselves around Xunhua where, two centuries earlier, the Salar had stabilized their colony, and finally settled in the area of Jishi Shan. Thus they constituted a buffer between the Hui Muslims of Hezhou and the Salar Muslims and Tibetans in the Yellow River area around Xunhua (in today's Qinghai province).⁵⁸

During the Yongzheng reign (1723-35) of the Manchu-Chinese Empire Muslim immigration into

Amdo started from southern Gansu's Hezhou area. Those Muslims seem to be some other descendants of the Uyghurs of the Middle Ages who had substantially participated in power during the Chinese Tang dynasty (618-907). The Hui Muslims settled in Tsongkha valley and around Hualong on the northern slopes of the Yellow River canyon. The Muslims of Datong, north of Xining, originally came from northern Gansu's Liangzhou (Wuwei).⁵⁹ As at that time these parts of Amdo were part of Gansu province, it was a matter of provincial and not of national settlement policy. In the train of the 'pacification' of the Mongol tribes during the Qianlong era of Manchu-Chinese rule, the Hui Muslims filled the political vacuum in Tibet's northeast, and encroached southwestward from Xining toward northern Kham, thus dominating the trade routes.

From 1727 until the mid-20th century, the whole of Amdo—with the exception of the vast grasslands of the pastoral Ngolok and Serta—was controlled by the Muslim Ma clan.⁶⁰ The territory that they looked upon as their family's realm was the foundation for Kokonor province of the Manchu Empire and, consequently, for the present-day Chinese province of Qinghai. Border delimitations on the boundary line with central Tibet have hardly changed. Though today Hui Muslims are found all over Amdo, the aforesaid places are still their main colonies, and generally they live in towns rather than in the country. The thoroughly Chinese character of central Tsongkha—the heartland of Lower Amdo—is last but not least produced by the presence of the Hui who are sinicized descendants of medieval Central Asian Uyghurs.⁶¹

About two centuries ago, Tibetans again started to penetrate the Kokonor and Ma Chu areas which earlier were populated by Mongolian tribes. Their migration started with the upcoming influence of Amdo's huge Labrang Monastery.⁶² Today there are only a few Mongolian families left in the area north and east of Lake Kokonor, with some more found only south of Rongwo valley. The Mongolian tribes had to withdraw into the desolate domains of the Tsaidam Basin which was more or less deserted, as the Tibetans' livestock—yaks and sheep—couldn't bear the arid climate there. The camels, horses and fat-tail sheep can endure the rough conditions in Tsaidam's deserts.⁶³

The last minority group that immigrated into Amdo were the Kazakhs who, ethnically, are more likely

of Kirgiz origin. They entered the area near the western end of the Qilian Shan mountains and into northern Tsaidam in 1936.⁶⁴ They had been suffering from the bloody rule of the Xinjiang warlord Sheng Shicai and therefore they started to move eastward into those parts of Gansu and Qinghai which are considered to belong to Amdo. Actually their situation did not improve much as the Muslim regime of the Qinghai warlord Ma Bufang suppressed them as much as he did the Tibetans and Mongolians in the area.⁶⁵

The name of the province comprising most of Amdo in today's People's Republic of China, Qinghai, is the literal translation of the Mongolian word *Kokonor* [Khöke Nor] and Tsho Ngombo (*mtsho sngon po*) in Tibetan. It means 'blue lake' or 'blue sea', named after the largest lake on the entire Tibetan Plateau. The history of the province started in 1727 when the Ma family gained control over it. In 1928 Qinghai (former English spelling: Tsing hai) was re-established as a province of the Nationalists' Republic of China, its area enlarged at the expense of neighbouring Gansu. After the Chinese Red Army's victory over Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist troops, the Muslim warlord of Qinghai, Ma Bufang, succumbed to the Communists.

2.3. Highlights of Amdo culture

Being a pivot between the civilizations of Tibet, Mongolia, Inner China and the Silk Road, the cultural province of Amdo in the northeast of the Tibetan Highland shelters relics and monuments belonging to various epochs and different cultural realms. Ruins, tombs and more archaeological sites dating to prehistoric eras and pre-Buddhist pastoral societies are found, just as are vestiges of early Chinese dynasties. The Tibetan conquest of both north Tibet and neighbouring Central Asian regions in the 7th to 8th centuries, saw Mahayana Buddhism rooted there, since the proximity of Silk Road oases and Chinese Buddhism had already partially influenced the population of Amdo.

Starting with the Mongol conquest of Inner Asia and followed by a Chinese imperial policy of supporting Tibetan lamas, Amdo developed to become another religious and cultural core besides central Tibet.⁶⁶ Accordingly, there are some of the most important lamaseries, i.e. monastic centres of Tibetan Buddhism, among the numerous cultural relics found all over Amdo. If we particularly mention

Kumbum and Labrang monasteries, it is because these were most famous in the West, while other lamaseries, dating to an earlier age, had been very important focal points at their heyday. Therefore, monastic institutions and their furnishings can be considered to constitute the bulk of Amdo's cultural relics:

The monastery ... is the centre of all religious teachings of Buddha. On entering it, one is overcome with the wealth of creativity that abounds on the walls and altars of the various temples. ... The first [monastery] ... was based on a *mandala* as were those of subsequent monasteries and temples. (...) More than just a diagram, the mandala is a symbol of a consecrated region. The outer line which delineates the first layer of the mandala is the line which separates the terrestrial from the celestial. ... Just as the disciple mentally enters the spiritual realm of the diagram through concentrated meditation, he too, by physically entering the temple, arrives within a spiritual realm.⁶⁷

The lamaseries and their temple buildings were, and are again, the focus of Tibetan social activity, and as such they offer the pilgrims the possibility to worship Buddhist deities, and accumulate religious merits by donations to the monastic communities. Although it should not be forgotten that monasteries have always played an important role in Tibetan hegemonic politics, their most prominent function is education. In these monasteries monks are trained to acquire exemplary knowledge of fundamental Buddhist principles, of both exoteric and esoteric studies. For the ordinary faithful the temples submit an opulent pictorial broadsheet portraying the rich pantheon related to their everyday life. However, the statues and murals are not believed to just depict the deities, but the latter are presumed to dwell therein and hence to assist the worshipper:

The painting ... is a record of visions, mystical experiences and teachings which are laid down in texts or personally interpreted by lamas. ... The ... painted image ... means 'liberation through sight' [*(mthong grol)*], implying that the person viewing the painting [in which the deity is considered to dwell] and understanding it (or for that matter entering the temple) will be liberated through his vision of the spectacle.⁶⁸

As everything—each painting, each image, decoration and feature—has a symbolic meaning, the interpretation and explanation of those artistic elaborations lie beyond the scope of this work. Numerous catalogues and iconographical works, together with introductions into the philosophical and mystical systems of Tibetan Buddhism may have already led our reader to a certain understanding of Tibetan fine arts.⁶⁹ It is necessary to specify the historical, social and political prerequisites and accompanying circumstances of the development of relics found in northeastern Tibet, in modern Amdo.

The richness in architectonic shaping and the profusion of artistic and ornamental fittings of monasteries in Amdo reflect the versatile cultural exchange relationships. Qutan Si is looked upon as one of those jewels of the olden times, as its architecture dates from the early Ming dynasty (14th to 15th centuries) and its walls carry some of the oldest murals of eastern Tibet. Similarly, Tsangwa Gompa of virtually hidden Dzamthang must be seen as a major vestige of medieval Tibetan history, although and because the order it represents, the Jonangpa, was eliminated in Tibet proper.

Yet, historically, many Amdo monasteries are also among the most significant in Tibet and China. According to a local legend, it was in northeastern Tibet that Buddhism started to recover after it had been wiped out by the Yarlung dynasty King Langdarma. Amdo monasteries other than Gelugpa are generally underestimated, as the renowned lamaseries of Kumbum and Labrang, besides other important monastic institutions of the Yellow Hats, overshadow the fact that there were important monastic institutions of all Tibetan Buddhist orders before the Gelugpas' arrival.⁷⁰ Even today, the latter are mainly represented in northern and central Amdo, while in the southern half the Nyingmapa play a similarly predominant role.⁷¹ (see map, fig. M4)

Tsongkhapa, founder of this most influential order of Lamaism, was born in Amdo's heartland, and the Kumbum Monastery was founded in his memory. The presumably oldest monastery of Amdo, Shyachung Gompa, is where the great reformer started his monastic career. The high density of Gelugpa monasteries distributed all over Amdo, particularly in the most populated areas, may give an idea of the importance of Tibet's northeast for the development of this Buddhist school. It was well-represented here even before the Gelugpa overcame

all resistance in central Tibet. The political importance of Lamaism is further shown by monastic centres like Labrang Tashi Khyil—one of the 'big five' of the whole of Tibet—, Rongwo Gönen, Kirti Gompa, Tagtshang Lhamo, and Ragya Gompa near holy Mt. Amnye Machen. Even among autonomous principalities like Chone and among non-Tibetan tribes like the Tu and Yugur, the influence of the Gelugpa spread quickly, and left its traces in lamaseries like Rgolung (Chin. *Youning Si*) which became the spiritual centre for the Tu-Monguor population. At the same time, the high incarnate lamas kept in touch with the Chinese Imperial court in Beijing and developed to become a significant political factor in the Chinese Empire. The importance of Amdo's spiritual leaders and therefore Tibetan influence at the imperial court should not be underestimated.

Close observation of remote and secluded valleys shows that Lamaist scholarship was not fended off, even though some of their inhabitants, like the notorious Ngolok tribes, were ill-famed for their ruthless temper. Not only did they produce monastic communities like other Tibetans, but even developed artistic expressions of their own. Nowhere else on the Tibetan Plateau can we find large-scale architectural interpretations of a 'pure land' than in the Nyingmapa realm of eastern Tibet. Monasticism has experienced an impressive revival in Amdo (and Kham), accounting for about a third of the more than 3,000 Tibetan monasteries and temples which have been rebuilt during the last two decades.⁷² Nobody should be astonished to meet with monastic institutions that did not exist before 1950, and one of these, Serthang Larung Academy, is supposedly the world's largest Buddhist institution.

Beyond that, vast expanses of Amdo offer some of the most splendid and varied landscapes of the Tibetan Plateau, reaching from the glacial world of Qilian and Kunlun Shan to the charming valleys of Tsongkha, through rugged canyons of the Yellow River to the deserts of Tsaidam Basin and the vast grasslands of the Changthang steppes. At their point of intersection the highland's biggest water body and most famous lake stretches like an unperturbable oasis of peace—the 'Blue Lake'. It is known in the West by its Mongolian name Kokonor, while the Tibetans call it Tsho Ngombo. The land throughout Amdo is full of legends; various peoples and old cultures left their traces there in many archaeological sites, thus adding even more colour to this part of the 'roof of the world'.

The Qinghai Part of Amdo

Central Amdo, the "inner" monasteries, seems to bring their masters only when it is hot. Since this was the build in 1437, in Choskhor (Lhasa's local language) to establish the hereditary Dharma King Sonam Gyatso of Amdo to the northeast, somehow way down south in charge. Travelling a lot through central



Plate 1. The great silver chörten of Tsongkhapa's miraculous tree
in Kumbum Monastery

1. Kumbum Jampa Ling (Ta'er Si)

The lamasery of the hundred thousand buddha images,¹ the celebrated Kumbum monastery, for a long time was not only the most easily reached Tibetan lamasery, but also the most famous—at least outside central Tibet. Its location in Tsongkha, the area around Huang Shui² river valley, that may be considered the natural gateway to Tibet, brought it in permanent and close contact with imperial China and the Mongolians. Nowadays Kumbum is the one lamasery that is the closest to a Chinese big city and therefore has best access by public transport. Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai province, can be reached by plane and by train from Beijing. The monastery is located in Huangzhong, a county of which the seat lies in Lusha'er (*Rushar* in Tibetan) at about 25 km southwest of Xining. The area is dominated by a mixed population of Hui Muslims and Han-Chinese, though villages in the surrounding hills are inhabited by Tibetan farmers who have historically undergone an intense acculturation.³

The development of Kumbum Jampa Ling (*sKu 'bum byams pa gling*) is closely related to the history of Tibetan-Mongolian relationships and marks the beginning of the rise of the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Its founding was to mark and commemorate the birthplace of the great reformer and founder of the Gelugpa, Losang Dragpa, later called Tsongkhapa.⁴ The monastery here was not founded until one and a half centuries after his death and the start of the Gelugpa tradition, though. On the eve of Kumbum's founding, the area around Huangzhong was amongst the most insecure regions of Amdo. Tibetans of the Kokonor region, who had been driven from their pastures by the Mongols of Ibulas, made raids, and about five decades later the Kokonor Mongols themselves looted the area. That is probably why this important location was only taken into use as a monastery much later on.⁵ Kham in eastern Tibet was reached much earlier by the Gelugpa, as there the first monastery started being built in 1437, in Chamdo of western Kham. The way to Amdo in the northeast somehow was determined

by the political situation both in southern Tibet and Central Asia, and the Gelugpa commitment there has to be seen in tight connection with what was happening in Ü and Tsang.

Though in a few years after their formation the Gelugpa had extended all over the central Tibetan provinces of Ü and Tsang and as far as Kham, for a long time they had a hard time to prevail. Since the beginning of the 15th century, it were no more the struggles of rival noble families round which Tibetan history gravitated, but since those ruling clans were worn out and reduced in number, the rivalry between the different Buddhist orders dominated Tibet's political scene. In particular it was the rivalry between the Red sect Karma-Kagyüpa which was supported by the lords of Tsang, and the Yellow (Hat) sect,⁶ Gelugpa, the prestige of which grew quickly. Both were ably conspiring together with parts of the aristocracy. Thus it is not surprising that the Gelugpa's expansion and rapid growth of spiritual influence aroused the suspicions of rival sects. Particularly about the turn of the 15th to the 16th century, monks and monasteries of the Yellow sect were always anticipating persecution. Not only that Lhasa was closed to Gelugpa monks for two decades, but in places far from the order's strongholds many Gelugpa monasteries were also obliged to change their faith and go over to the Karma-Kagyüpa.⁷

In such a situation, they found their supporters in the representative of the old supreme power of Tibet, the Phagmodrupa dynasty. As the latter's power was about to decline, the political hegemony could not be maintained for long, which put the development of the Gelugpa order at high risk. In 1537, still during the time of Gedün Gyatsho, later looked upon as the 2nd Dalai Lama, the Gelugpa lost 18 monasteries to the rival Drigung sect. Wars that ravaged Tibet in 1553, 1563 and 1565, although always started by the noblemen, involved the lamaist orders, whether they wanted it or not. Such was the situation when the 3rd Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatsho was put in charge. Travelling a lot through central

Tibet, he again furthered the Gelugpa's prestige, and it was this fame that brought him together with the Mongolian prince Altan Khan in 1577. Sönam Gyatsho was addressed by Altan Khan as the 'Ta-le Lama'—which has become today's Dalai Lama—with Ta-le meaning 'ocean' as does Tibetan *gyatsho*.⁸

Hence dSod [sic!] nams rgya mts'o's [Sönam Gyatsho] journey to Mongolia ... must be explained mainly by the Tibetan situation and the interests of the dGe lugs pa who had resolved to obtain help from the new converts, as soon as the threat against them should be about to break out violently.

When the Mongol prince Altan Khan and bSod nams rgya mts'o met, they believed they were living over again Qubilai's and aP'ags pa's experiences. Both the Mongol chief and the abbot of aBras spungs [Drepung] were flattered by this return of the past: the former believed himself predestined to his ancestor's glory, while the latter anticipated he would obtain, in that troubled period, the support of a new power appearing on Tibet's frontiers. ... it was meanwhile to the Yellows' advantage to secure in Mongolia faithful devotees, who should descend upon Tibetan monasteries no longer as invaders but as pilgrims, not to prey but to offer gifts.⁹

Furthermore the imperial court of the Chinese Ming dynasty also encouraged Tibetan lamas to make visits to Mongolian chiefs as the emperors had realized that Mongol militancy might be softened by Buddhist influences.¹⁰

When in 1578 the Grand Lama of the Yellow sect, Sönam Gyatsho, met Altan Khan near Lake Kokonor, the first temple of Kumbum Jampa Ling had just been consecrated¹¹—the Monastery of a hundred thousand Maitreya Buddha images.¹² Later on, when in 1584 Sönam Gyatsho travelled a second time to Amdo, he also visited Kumbum and endowed a study college. After he died four years later during his stay in Mongolia, Kumbum monastery had a stupa—Tib. chörten (*mchod rten*), Chin. *ta(er)*—built for the remains of this great master of the Gelugpa order.¹³

However, a different chörten marked the emergence of this big lamasery, after which Kumbum got its

Chinese name Ta'er Si—Monastery of the Stupa.¹⁴ According to tradition, this chörten was built in 1379 by Tsongkhapa's mother, Shingsa Ache (*shing bza'a che*), at the place where at her son's birth the placenta fell to the ground. Three years later, it is said, a miraculous sandalwood tree sprang from where the blood had been seeping into the earth. On its bark appeared the holy mantra of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, and the leaves bore a hundred thousand images of Buddha *Sengge naro*, naturally inscribed.¹⁵

Although it seems a hermitage existed by 1560, founded by Rinchen Tsondru Gyaltsen, the decision for the construction of a larger monastery was not taken until 1596.¹⁶ The first temple was inaugurated in 1577 near Shingsa Ache's chörten, its completion being six years later. It is the above mentioned Hall of Maitreya, Jampe Lhakhang (*Mila Dian* in Chinese), which is surrounded by a gallery of prayer-wheels. The main image for worship is Maitreya, formed after the Lhasa Jowo, the latter showing Buddha Shakyamuni as a prince at the age of 12 (*Byams pa mgon po*).¹⁷ It is said to contain Tsongkhapa's hair, his monastic hat¹⁸ and several other relics. Besides, there is the reliquary stupa of the monastery's founder Rinchen Tsondru Gyaltsen.¹⁹

To the right of this oldest building we find the most sacred hall, Serdong or Serkhang Chenmo (*gSer khang chen mo*), which means Great Gold-tiled Temple (Chin. *Da Jinwa Dian*). It is the spot of the miraculous tree as the legendary story tells us and where Tsongkhapa's mother Shingsa Ache had built the memorial chörten. After many restorations and extensions done by eminent personalities like the 3rd Dalai Lama in 1582, by Tsenpo Nomun Khan in 1784 and others in 1642 and 1712, the silver chörten had reached today's height of twelve metres.²⁰ Covered by numerous ribbons and Khatag ceremonial scarves this memorial stupa is the main object of veneration in Kumbum, as is the enshrined statue of Tsongkhapa.

There is little skylight falling into the interior of this Sanctum sanctorum, the space of which is divided by eighteen pillars, all painted in red. Several other memorial and reliquary chörten are grouped around the one of Tsongkhapa. Besides, a stone print of his foot when he was a child is kept here, as well as a gilded bronze image of Maitreya that was given to Kumbum by the 7th Dalai Lama. On the back

side of the hall we have a statue of Tsongkhapa in the centre, while a Kanjur of 101 volumes—written with ink made of gold, silver and precious stones—canonic scriptures and Tsongkhapa works, printed in Dege and Narthang, are stored on the walls.²¹

The premises of the Serdongkhang came into existence when the original chörten was enclosed in between walls covered by aquamarine tiles. It is overlooked by the gilded, three-layered Chinese style gable and hipped roof (Chin. *xieshan wuding*) added in 1708 and renewed in 1883, which can thus be seen from afar. The whole building with its area of 450 square metres is a masterpiece of Ming architecture. During its construction it did not integrate many Tibetan structural forms—except the black band of shelf that imitates cut brushwood (*su ru*). The upper part of the roof is an artistically first-rate combination of Chinese architecture and Tibetan forms of ornamentation, though they also are inspired by Chinese designs.²²

In front of the Serkhang Chenmo we find a group of holy trees considered as off-shoots of the original tree that depicted the ‘hundred thousand images of Buddha Sengge Naro’ and after which the monastery was named. To the north, i.e. on the right side of this main building, the so-called Jokhang is consecrated to Shakyamuni in the form of *Jowo*, while the temple in front of it shelters statues of Tsongkhapa and Yamantaka, the Gelugpa’s main protector deity. Both buildings, constructed in 1604 and 1594 respectively, are among the oldest in Kumbum.

The ceremonial core of the monastic complex of Kumbum Jampa Ling is the Great Assembly Hall or Tshogchen dukhang (*tshogs chen ‘du khang* oder *tsug lag khang*), originally constructed in 1612 as a mixture of Han-Chinese and Tibetan styles. In 1639 it was rebuilt into a typical Tibetan flat-roofed hall. This architectural Tibetan feature is kept up to the present although historical demolitions entailed several reconstructions and enlargements. Thus, the assembly hall’s pillars grew in number from 36 in 1639 to 80 in 1661, and finally 154 in 1776. As it burned down in 1912, when the monastery’s climax of power and influence had already been exceeded, its reconstruction was content with a hall of more moderate size, accomplished in 1915, but with the symbolical number of 108 pillars (not including the 60 pillars in the walls).²³ They are wrapped in carpets with ornate yellow dragon motifs, mostly gifts

of Mongolian chiefs from the small princedoms of Alashan and Ejina (Karakhoto) of the western part of Inner Mongolia.²⁴

Like most of Kumbum’s main buildings, the entrance gate of the Tshogchen dukhang (Chin. *dajingtang*) faces east. It first leads into a spacious outer courtyard, then across several steps beneath the outer corridor with its colourful murals. They depict the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni (in the courtyard) and the ordinary paintings at temple entrances such as the wheel of life and death (*bhavacakra*) and the four guardian kings (*lokapalas*). The paintings on Kumbum monastery’s temple walls are—like almost everywhere in Amdo—actually not murals, but painted on canvas that after completion is spread across and fixed to the walls.²⁵ The assembly hall extends just in front of the holy Serkhang Chenmo, which, together with the accompanying three side buildings, is standing on an elevated platform and thus overlooking the dukhang. Although it is Kumbum’s largest building, it is hard to believe that formerly there were up to 3500 monks²⁶ gathering to recite the scriptures. Except for some higher learned lamas, all the monks have to participate in these recitations in the morning and in the evening, which could last up to three hours. During the breaks they are served tea that the youngest monks bring from a nearby kitchen, some 300 years old (built in 1689), just off the dukhang’s northern door. Copper cauldrons measuring 1.6 - 2.6 metres in diameter and up to 1.3 metres in depth²⁷ can still be seen there, and also the big shelves with all the huge wooden jugs of three to five litres capacity.

The Tshogchen dukhang is not only the main assembly hall, but at the same time it functions as Tshennyi Dratshang, the college of logical debate.²⁸ The study of Indian classical logic is stressed within the Gelugpa order, and therefore comes ahead of Tantric initiations. This college was founded in 1612 on the initiative of the 4th Dalai Lama and placed in this sublime assembly hall.

Besides the dragon-carpets of the pillars, the numerous appliquéd thangkas and brocade festoons (*ba dang*) lend a colourful and festive character to the otherwise dark interior of the dukhang. There one might call to mind the ornate butter sculptures which are being made again nowadays, and for which Kumbum is very famous. They are set up especially for the major festivities, and then destroyed several hours afterwards. The best of the butter sculptures

are kept for longer in Kumbum and are displayed inside a special concrete hall of Chinese style that was built in about 1990 for this purpose only. There one may see a buddha sculpture of life-size, entire scenarios with up to 500 small figures portraying the reception of the Panchen Lama at the Qianlong-emperor's court in Beijing in 1780, or even the Chinese princess Wencheng's marriage to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. It is not surprising that the monk artists of Kumbum at all times knew how to form various colourful *gtor ma* figures made of butter and barley or wheat flour. They are set up as offerings or produced for ceremonies in order to prevent and banish all evil deities and hostile powers.

Like in Lhasa the most beautiful butter sculptures in Kumbum were displayed on the last day of the two week-long New Year's festival that is related to Buddha's miracles in Sravasti.²⁹ As this falls on the 15th day of the first Tibetan month,³⁰ that day of the festival is also called the 'offerings of the fifteenth' (*bchu lnga mchod pa*). They mainly consist of *mchod pa* (offering, sacrifice), as the wooden scaffoldings of 15 metres height or more are called, and which are used to exhibit the artistic butter sculptures³¹ side by side with countless butter lamps, Chinese lanterns, multicoloured brocade festoons (*ba dang*) and thangkas. Along the nangkhor³², i.e. the inner circle of ritual circumambulation, the *gtor ma* decorations reaching up to ten metres height are also set up for that one single night, from sunset to dawn. When again celebrated in 1980, after many years of break during the Cultural Revolution, the 'butter festival' attracted some 100,000 visitors. Thus, for one day Kumbum had become the Monastery of a hundred thousand pilgrims.

Since then, as in old times and like on the Barkhor in Lhasa, Buddhists from all parts of Central and Eastern Asia and tourists from all over the world gather again to see this festival of Kumbum. They have many reasons to come: praying and offerings for the New Year, meritorious donations to the holy place of Tsongkhapa's birth, curiosity about the big celebrations and meeting people, trading at the huge market in front of the lamasery, visiting friends or family members or exchanging news—and generally a desire for a liturgical spectacle and a visual religious experience for the laymen who are ordinarily excluded from the lamaist rites. Besides the colours of the temples and the varieties of ceremonies, it is the people that make the festivities of Kumbum so

varied, as buddhist believers of different nationalities assemble here. No other monastic centre of Tibetan Buddhism is situated like it at the point of intersection of different cultural regions and between such different peoples and ethnic groups. What they can see as well, four times a year, are the traditional Cham mask dances³³ with the ceremony of banning the evil deities and summoning the friendly ones.

The whole of the monastic complex is surrounded by four ridges of hills. The original entrance to Kumbum Monastery once was marked by Chörten Goshi (*sgo bzhi*), a gate erected in 1748 in the form of a big chörten originally having gateways on all four sides. Although it still exists—with just two gateways left—it now lies off the market street which leads to the lamasery, several metres higher on the right-hand side's slope.

Sightseeing tours of the monastery ordinarily start at the 'Eight Stupas', *mchod rten brgyad*, symbolizing the eight grand events in the life of Buddha Shakyamuni: his birth in Lumbini, visit as a great teacher in the heavenly realm of the Gods (in paintings symbolized by steps or a ladder), acquiring the strength for a long life through the goddess Namgyalma (Vijaya), firmness against the temptations of Mara while meditating below the bodhi tree, final victory over Mara, enlightenment in Bodhgaya, first teaching (lecture) on the path to spiritual liberation in Sarnath and his entering Nirvana. These chörten of 6.4 metres height are of similar shape but have differences in their detailed elaboration. They were built in 1776 and are—as a restoration in the 1990s has shown—made of bricks. According to a local legend they commemorate eight lamas of Kumbum who were killed by a prince during the revolt of Lobsang Tenzin.³⁴

The ticket office and a small guesthouse is on the right, which is to the western side of the eight chörten, whilst we find the important temple of the Tantra college to the east. As the Chinese roof of this two-storeyed Tibetan-style building is gilded, it is popularly called the 'small gold-tiled hall' (Chin. *Xiao Jinwa Dian*) while its Tibetan name is given as Tsenkhang Chenmo.³⁵ Built in 1692 and enlarged in 1826, it is the temple of protector deities and thus full of wrathful masks and statues of protectors, weapons for ritual purposes, paintings of tortured spirits, skulls and the 'dancing lords of the charnel grounds'. On the wooden veranda of the courtyard's second floor gallery stuffed bodies of sacrificed ani-

mals like boar, goat, wolf, deer and bear can be seen. As mounts of the protector deities they are bound to symbolize their supernatural powers. Among them a white horse is famous for once having carried the Panchen Lama from central Tibet's Shigatse to Kumbum within a single day. Most important in this temple is Pehar, here shown as the 'Fivefold King' (*rgyal po*) or Gönpö Kunga, who is the special protector of the Nechung oracle. The gate of the protector's hall faces west unlike the rest of the lamasery's temples, with the Shabten Lhakhang being the second exception.

On leaving the Tsenkhang, we pass by the Kalacakra Stupa, Dünkhör Chörten (*dus 'khor mchod rten*), that was donated after a Japanese air raid on the monastery miraculously left it undamaged, and find the next temple to the southwest. It is the so-called 'Flower Temple' (Chin. *Hua Si*), or rather hall of longevity, Shabten Lhakhang in Tibetan. Completed in 1717 and consecrated by the 7th Dalai Lama, its main statues depict Shakyamuni together with his two foremost disciples and the bodhisattvas Manjushri and Samantabhadra. The statues of 16 arhats along the side-walls are said to be made by the 7th Dalai Lama. Outside the hall and to the right of the entrance a chapel is dedicated to Rushar's local mountain god Liuqi.³⁶ In the courtyard, in the shadow of a holy tree, there is a stone smeared with fat and covered with offerings of coins and wool. According to a local tradition, it served Tsongkhapa's mother as a resting place whenever she fetched water from the nearby river.

Next to the Shabten Lhakhang and a little bit further southwest is the inconspicuous entrance to the Parkhang, the printing house of Kumbum. It started its activities in 1817. In a big lamasery like this, monks are not only trained in the traditional arts of making butter sculptures and painting thangkas, but they also carve the wooden printing blocks and do the printing themselves. Besides the canonical scriptures of Buddhism the eighteen volumes of writings of the Yellow sect's founder Tsongkhapa are also published here, altogether 313 treatises.

The Medical College, one of the four study faculties of Kumbum, is passed by next. Founded in 1757 Menba Dratshang contains the main images of Tsongkhapa, a Jowo Shakyamuni, the Medicine Buddha Bhaisajyaguru and Tara, besides a three-dimensional mandala of the Eight Medicine Buddhas. To the south the main complex of the dukhang

and the oldest and most holy temples join up, most of them having been described already. In addition, to the western side of the big courtyard where the Cham mask dances are performed four times a year, we have the impressive Manjushri Temple, or Jamyang Kunsik Lhakhang. The elongated building with its green Chinese-style roof dates from 1593. Despite its name the main image is not just the one large statue of Manjushri in the centre, but there are also exquisite statues of Simhanada (Lion's Roar Buddha Shakyamuni) to the right and Tsongkhapa to the left, surrounded by images of Sitatapatra and Sarasvati, the bodhisattvas Manjughosa, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani, the 3rd and 4th Dalai Lamas and protector deities.

The southernmost part of the monastery is occupied by two other study colleges of Kumbum, namely Dünkhör Dratshang for the study of Kalacakra-based astronomy, astrology, calendar and esoteric practices, founded in 1817, and the Gyüpa Dratshang, a Tantric college dating from 1649. Both are well equipped with statues and murals—such as those of Maitreya, Shakyamuni and the Yidam-deities Yamantaka, Cakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja in the large main hall of the latter, and Kalacakra, Shakyamuni, and Avalokiteshvara in the Dünkhör Dratshang. The last college, Champa Dratshang, is for the study of religious dancing, to the north on the hill above the gate Chörten Goshi.

No matter how much time is spent in Kumbum, a first or last view should always be taken from the top of the hill opposite the lamasery's entrance. To the south is the slope where the huge thangkas are unrolled at festivals; Kumbum's big Ta'er Si Hotel extends just to the foot of the hill. From the top we still can make out several other temple-like buildings. These are tulku residencies, i.e. of incarnate lamas. Like many Tibetan monasteries, the rule that temples and sanctuaries cover the slope facing the east was followed in Kumbum too. Looking west and northwest we just find single houses, living-quarters of the monks and residencies of well endowed tulkus.³⁷ There were 80 such incarnations, tulku (*sprul sku*) in Tibetan and *huofo* in Chinese, at Kumbum's heyday at the beginning of the 18th century, when the lamasery had some 3,600 monks.³⁸ Around 1989 there were eleven tulkus among 520 monks, and that number seems to be more or less stable.³⁹

Three of the incarnated khutuktus, as the tulku are called in Mongolian language, resided in Beijing, the capital of imperial China. Most famous among them is Achia Khutuktu who is considered to be the reincarnation of Tsongkhapa's father. He had to reside in Beijing to show Kumbum's formal dependence on the Chinese emperor. Actually the monastery's administration de facto was totally autonomous, as in religious matters it was also independent of Lhasa. The Dalai Lama's spiritual supremacy as head of the Gelugpa was never in question.⁴⁰ It seems that the title of this incarnate lama did not come up before 1746, two decades after the big revolt of Lobsang Tendzin had been suppressed. According to a local tradition, though, Achia Khutuktu had already administered Kumbum—and its 21 subordinate monasteries—as a khempo (*mkham po*, Chin. *fatai*) since 1417.

It was under the jurisdiction of the Muslim military governors of Xining that Kumbum taxed rural settlements and pastoral tribes of the surrounding area. It is to be noted that historically political involvement of the Chinese imperial court in decisions on the appointment of high incarnations in Amdo ought not to be overlooked, as can be seen from the position of the Achia Khutuktu and other high Amdo lamas. When the candidate for the re-incarnation of the Panchen Lama, already identified in 1941, was first presented to the nationalist Chinese government in 1949 and, the following year, to the newly established government of the PR of China, one may say that such a historical precedent was being followed. It should be noted that the involvement ordinarily is rather a formal act that is recognizing the political authority of the state, while religious matters are still decided quite autonomously within the precincts of the monastery.⁴¹

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2. Lamaseries in Tsongkha (Valley of Onions)

As already hinted at in our introduction the valley of the Yellow River tributary Huang Shui may be considered a natural gateway to Tibet, and it actually is the famous region called Tsongkha by Tibetans. As an ethnic patchwork of Tibetans and other people it is also described by Lama Tsenpo (dec. 1839), the author of the only original Tibetan work dealing with the geography of the Tibetan Plateau in toto:

Tsong-kha, which is the birthplace of the Rgyal ba'i gnyis pa (Second Buddha: i.e., Tsong-kha-pa), is referred to in some historical chronicles as 'Lcong-kho-zan-shankwau', and as a 'famous district (yul) of Tibet'. Nowadays, through the force of time not only is it filled by many who are blind in their religious-eye, such as Chinese and Musul-man (Moslems); but, even the Tibetans and the Hor are gradually coming to the point where they believe in the Chinese teachers, Khung-tsi (Confucius) and Lau-tsi (Lao-tzu), and in the Sig (Sikh) teacher Na-nig.¹

Thus it is seen that Tsongkha must be considered as one of those areas in Amdo which came under Chinese (and other) influences very early, and at least by the beginning of the 19th century Tsongkha Tibetans already showed distinct signs of acculturation.

A Tibetan source² outlines Tsongkha as the region between the Yellow River in the south, Tsong Chu in the north, and centering around the monastery of Kumbum. This would imply that the 'Valley of Onions', as Tsongkha often is translated,³ should be limited to the southern banks of the latter river. On the other hand, there are some other districts between the Yellow River and Kumbum that do not belong to Tsongkha. Furthermore Lama Tsenpo in his description of Tsongkha includes monasteries north of the Tsong Chu. The distant county of Ping'an is called Tsongkha khar⁴ in Tibetan. Thus it is not correct to equate Tsongkha with today's

Chinese county of Huangzhong (Wylie 1962). The area around Kumbum has for long been addressed as Huangzhong (Huang-chung in Wade-Giles spelling), but this meant the middle reaches of the Huang Shui river. It is therefore evident that the district of Tsongkha must extend over a wider area than indicated by Wylie.⁵

Among the meanings of the Tibetan word *kha* is 'origin, source' and the like,⁶ and often district names of the kind 'river name + *kha*' show up at the upper reaches of the rivers concerned, for example Nagchukha and Nyachukha. The name of Tsongkha may thus be taken as the '[area around the] origin [headwaters of the] Tsong [chu river]' and the district of Tsongkha is to be considered as the valleys of the drainage area of that river, called *Tsong Chu* in Tibetan and *Huang Shui*⁷ in Chinese. This region stretches east of Lake Kokonor and the Nyima Dawa La Pass,⁸ and includes the main valley of the river Tsong Chu and several side-valleys. Hence the Tibetan-named district of Tsongkha would be comprising today's Chinese-named counties of Huangyuan [*stong'khor* in Tibetan] and Huangzhong [*ru shar*], Huzhu [*dgon lung*], Ping'an [*tsong kha khar*], Ledu [*gro tshang*] and Minhe [*bka'ma log*], plus the city of Xining [*zi ling*] including its county Datong Xian [*gser khog*].

2.1. Qutan Monastery

Situated in a side-valley of the river Tsong Chu, Qutan Lamasery (Chin. *Qutan Si*) lies 21 km south of Ledu County town. Leaving Qinghai's provincial capital Xining on the main road to Lanzhou, Ledu, at 63 km distance, will be reached in about one hour. The main valley is densely populated by Han-Chinese and Hui Muslims and is to be left in a southward direction at the entrance to Ledu township. A well maintained road brings one to Qutan village. The typical Chinese-style roofs of the monastery buildings, lying at the foot of a verdant mountain,

can be seen from afar. The lamasery's name is interpreted as the Chinese form of Buddha's family name, *Qiaodamo*, i.e. Gautama,⁹ while in Tibetan the full name is given as Drotshang Lhakhang Gotamde (*gro tshang lha khang go tam sde*).¹⁰

The history of Qutan Lamasery is handed down by two stone tablets in the first courtyard. Their inscriptions date back to the early Ming emperors Zhu Gaozhi (Hongxi reign, 1425) and Zhu Zhanji (Xuande reign, 1426-1435). According to those records there existed already a monastery here before the beginning of the dynasty, that is to say prior to 1368. The architectural complex preserved until today is of true Ming style, though, and was established by the Tibetan Karma-Kagyüpa lama Samlo¹¹ whose monastic name was Sanggye Tashi (*Sangs rgyas bkra shis*).¹² This Samlo Lama originated from south Tibet's Lhodrag and wandered about as an itinerant monk. Thus he came to Amdo, where he spent many years meditating on the island in the middle of Lake Kokonor—which is why he got the epithet *Haixin Lama*, i.e. the lama of the heart of [Kokonor] Lake. His fame reached to the emperor of the newly established Ming dynasty which was to become an ardent supporter of Lamaism in Tibet. Particularly in Amdo a large number of monasteries were established during that period of 'lead (a people) according to their customs by leading (them) through monks and laymen': a policy of control through conciliation by the promotion of religious activities.¹³ In 1389 Samlo Lama was invited to visit the capital Nanjing where he was granted the title of an imperial tutor (Chin. *dishi*) by Emperor Ming Taizu (Hongwu reign 1368-98).

According to Tibetan tradition, Samlo Lama travelled high above in the sky riding a white elephant and thus reached the capital Nanjing very quickly: that is why he was also called the master Sanggye Tashi riding a white elephant (*glang dkarpa sangs rgyas bkra shis*).¹⁴ Upon his return to Amdo in 1392, he surveyed the completion of the 'Buddhist temple of the perfectly wise Samlo'.¹⁵ The year later the emperor bestowed on it the red board with golden letters that is still hanging above the entrance of the front hall. It honours the temple by the designation Qutan Si (Gautama Temple).¹⁶ In 1393, the Ming court established an office called *Xining dugangsi* that was in charge of all the monasteries of Xining prefecture, and Samlo Lama was appointed its head.

During the Yongle reign (1403-1435) Emperor Chengzu appointed a nephew of the monastery's

founder to become abbot of Qutan Lamasery. Pälden Sangpo was granted the title of 'all-saving religious state tutor, capable of communicating with the gods, consecrated by sprinkling water on his head'.¹⁷ In the first half of the 15th century (between 1425 and 1435), Qutan Monastery was extended to the size it has today. The relationship with the Ming court was never broken off. Seven of its emperors issued several edicts directly concerning Qutan Si, had memorial tablets erected, bestowed high titles on its lamas or donated seals, censers, drums and statues. Most important were fiefs like mountain pastures, gardens and fields. Besides, thirteen other temples were subordinated to the lamasery, and the sovereignty over the Tibetan and Chinese population of thirteen valleys was transferred to it as well.¹⁸ Qutan Si had become most influential in the northeastern part of the Tibetan Highland, and its splendour as one of the oldest and largest lamaseries in what is now Qinghai province bears witness to that.

Following dynastic succession in the Chinese Empire in 1644 and the Gelugpa order of Tsong-khapa gaining strength in central Tibet in the 17th century, Qutan Lamasery's importance started to decline, especially during the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor (1723-35), when Manchu-Chinese power in central Tibet was consolidated. Other monasteries like Kumbum Jampa Ling, Guanghui Si (near Datong north of Xining) and Youning Si (of the Tu nationality) gradually took the place of Qutan Si, as the monks of Tu (Monguor) origin went to those newly built monasteries. Yet, if we look at the development of the number of residents at Qutan Si, this explanation seems to be rather inadequate. Schram noted more than 600 monks in the heyday of its glory,¹⁹ while on the eve of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the monastery had not more than sixty monks left.

While there was severe looting and defections during Muslim rebellions in 1862-1872 and 1895, the material damage at the lamasery was repaired. It was the religious institution that had deteriorated and provided the reason for its decay. At Qutan Si's prime time, two large subsidiary monasteries had been founded: Hongshan Si and Yaocaitai. As the latter was situated on the vast pasture grounds of the lamasery, it soon developed to a size which allowed it to accommodate 200 monks. There were reincarnated lamas in both monasteries, in Yaocaitai and the mother lamasery of Qutan Si. Friction

between them started and lasted for more than two centuries. Out of the eternal dispute over Yaocaitai's contributions to Qutan, the branch monastery finally declared its institutional independence in 1885. Furthermore it regarded itself as the owner of the land and forests formerly entrusted to it by the mother monastery. The serious fight at close quarters between the two was carried as a lawsuit to the Court of Justice. As it was dealt with subsequently at the subprefecture of Nienbei²⁰ and at the prefectoral Court of Xining, and as the Chinese officials were bribed by both parties, the case was not decided even after two decades. The wealth of the branch monastery, relying on its rich forests, finally determined the affair, as the fortune of Qutan Si was exhausted first.

The humiliated monks of the mother monastery went to Yaocaitai at night and burned its temples. The monks of Yaocaitai responded quickly, and the next day they went to Qutan at noon, burned the residencies of the high lamas and even killed two monks. Ten years after, in 1915, there were only 50 or 60 monks living at Qutan. More than 500 of them had left the mother monastery as they had been compelled to contribute to the expenses caused by the lawsuit that had lasted for decades, and to fulfill the levies imposed in connection with it. Tu, Tibetan and Chinese peasant families moved into the former quarters of about 600 monks. That is why Qutan Si was the only monastery in Tsongkha area where laymen and monks lived in the same compound.

The layout of Qutan Lamasery is 600 years old and typical of Chinese architecture of the Ming dynasty period. It is very suitable to demonstrate that in Amdo—and similarly in Mongolia some two centuries later (Erdeni Juu)—the earliest lamaist temples and monasteries had been built in typically Han-Chinese style, and Tibetan architectural features only spread in a later period—starting from the 16th to 17th centuries onward. We may recall the example of Kumbum Lamasery near Xining which represents a kind of transitional period. Still largely dominated by the Chinese style as far as roofs and the overall impression are concerned, the plan of the monastery and the ornamental details have become typically Tibetan. At Qutan Si this may be a result of a substantial reconstruction done in 1564 by Sherab Chogden (Drepung Samlo Rabjampa) in accordance with a prediction of the 3rd Dalai Lama.²¹ The upshot of this architectural development

is expressed by Labrang Tashi Khyil, which presents itself as the most typically Tibetan, though it is the youngest among the large lamaseries in Amdo.

On its area of one and a half hectare the buildings of Qutan Lamasery follow a strict plan of composition which is distinguished by three successive courtyards, arranged in perfect symmetry within a rectangular walled complex. Thus it is given a fortress-like appearance from the outside. The appearance of the monastic complex shows all signs of traditional Chinese palace architecture.

Starting with the front gate, 'Mountain Gate' (Chin. *Shan Men*), which gives passage into the first courtyard, we follow a central east-to-west axis on successively rising terraces. Upward along the axis we enter the next courtyard through the gate-like Hall of Heavenly Kings (*Jingang Dian*) and find ourselves in front of the oldest structure of the whole complex, Gautama Temple Hall (*Qutan Si Dian*). At its back rises the Hall of Precious Radiance (*Baoguang Dian*) in the same courtyard. The highest terrace is occupied by the huge Hall of the Thriving Nation (*Longguo Dian*), enthroned majestically at the prominent rear of the monastery. Symmetrically, on both sides of the tree-planted courtyards, some smaller buildings, stupas (Tib. *chörten*, *mchod rten*) and covered galleries are to be found. The second and third yards are flanked by a bell and drum tower respectively, and the wall is interrupted by two side gates.

Although the architectural plan realizes the pattern of Han-Chinese palace buildings and traditional temple complexes, we find some irregularity in the fact that there are two pairs of drum towers and bell towers. In addition to this, in Qutan Lamasery these are found in the second half of the monastery area while ordinarily they should be preceding the Hall of Heavenly Kings, a place that here is taken by two pavilions containing the Ming emperors' stone tablets. In Chinese architecture those bell and drum towers traditionally distinguish a sacred from a secular complex of which the architectural features are basically the same. The bell was to be tolled during the holy hours of the day, and it is thought to protect the faithful from clouding their awareness. Its ringing is a symbol for the Dharma, the teachings of Buddha, and is expected to penetrate into the deepest hells giving consolation to the tortured and tormented beings. The drum which formerly was beaten in the high building opposite to the bell tower

produced a thunder-like noise that would banish hostile powers threatening the absolute truth.²²

The notable Gautama Hall (*Qutan Si Dian*) is the oldest part of the complex. Built in 1392, it was restored once during the Qianlong reign (1736-95) of the Qing dynasty, but up to these days it carries a tablet showing the name of the temple, Qutan Si, in the calligraphy of the first Ming emperor. Consequently the entire monastery is called Qutan Si. Surrounded by four chörten, the whole building is resting on a brick terrace and covered by a two-layered gabled and hipped roof (Chin. *xieshan wuding*). The pagoda in the middle of the ridge, which is part of the roof decoration, symbolizes the central importance of Buddha's relics. The eaves are supported by a wooden railing which bars free access to the painted walls of the vestibule. The inside of the 170 m² hall once sheltered statues of the Trikala Buddhas. Now, the latter consecrate a temple building on the right hand side of Gautama Hall, where an elaborate caisson ceiling has been preserved as well as some early frescoes on the inner walls. Similar in shape but bigger in size is the Hall of Precious Radiance (*Baoguang Dian*) on Gautama Hall's back side. This building dates from 1418 and is of a square ground-plan. Of the former interior equipment only four marble seats with carved Chinese characters of the early Ming period are left. In the past there used to be gilded bronze statues of Shakyamuni Buddha (in his Jowo form) and two bodhisattvas; now we can find three 80 cm high sculptures made of mud. They represent the Buddhas of the past, present and future, i.e. Dipankara,²³ Shakyamuni and Maitreya. Murals of the early Ming period are partially to be seen on some beams of the interior wall. There is a wooden corridor all around the building which enables the pilgrim to perform his circumambulations.

The four chörten surrounding the old Qutan Si Dian recall a legend about the founding of the monastery. Schram²⁴ recounted it like this:

The origin of the celebrated monastery is overlaid with a wonderful legend, believed and enjoyed by the people. (...)

A lama, honored for his holiness, lived in secluded retirement on a high mountain near Ch'ü-t'an [Qutan]. He left for Beijing one July carrying a small pack held by a light wooden frame, on his back. The heat was tropical and

the holy man threw his mantle in the air, where it remained floating over his head protecting him the whole long way, even in the streets of Beijing. Emperor Hui-ti, seeing the miracle, renounced his throne,²⁵ left the palace and harem, and followed the returning holyman to Ch'ü-t'an with two of his ministers and his two brothers, all of whom became lamas.

At first the emperor resided at the very small monastery of Hung-shan-ssu, 60 *li* south of Ch'ü-t'an. He sent his cattle and horses to the pastures of Yao-ts'ao-t'ai and went to Ch'ü-t'an. There he planted his stick at a certain spot and suddenly it turned into a blossoming sandalwood tree; whereupon he decided to build a monastery and a temple around the tree.²⁶ (...)

The emperor had a well dug to be used for watering his horses. A small lama boy, while drawing water, fell into the well and disappeared. Only his clothes were seen in the river with which the well was connected underground. The emperor ordered the well to be filled and had a beautiful tower built over it. (...)

Inside the courtyard of the enormous temple are the ruins of four beautiful stupas built by the Emperor. At the base of each he had buried, at night, immense treasures. One of the previous incarnations of the Living Buddha dug up the treasure from one of the stupas at night and took it to his residential quarters; but within a few moments his palace vanished in a blaze. Since that time, no one has dared to try to remove the treasures.

As far as the outfit of the temples' interior is concerned, we shall remember best the Hall of the Thriving Nation (*Longguo Dian*). Built in 1427 on a large and high terrace, to which a large and magnificent staircase leads up to,²⁷ lined with stone balustrades; it is a tall building 16 m high and covering an area of 912 sq. m. Its importance is also shown by a two-layered *wudian*-style roof (a double curved hip roof) which in Chinese architecture symbolizes that the building is of major importance. A stone lotus seat of a lost Maitreya sculpture has survived from Ming times, while now a Padmasana-Buddha may be seen, as well as gilded bronze statues of the main bodhisattvas. The drum on an elephant in the right half is a stone-carved crouching elephant,

with lively cloud ornaments supported by a pillar-like structure that it carries on its back. The elephant looks over its shoulder and holds a flower with its trunk. A drum is placed on top of the elaborately carved stone. While murals in the smaller side-buildings of the monastery mostly are of a much later era, we can enjoy excellent examples of early Ming paintings in this hall. In the central part they portray Buddha Shakyamuni with his two main disciples and the Buddhas of the past and the future ages, accompanied by two bodhisattvas. On the side walls we are impressed by the fine works showing Tantric deities such as Kalacakra, Hevajra and other yidams of the supreme Yoga Tantra. If the light in this hall were not so faint, it would be a luminous work, exquisitely painted about 500 years ago, using natural earth colours.

There are two good reasons for going up the Big Bell Tower which lies on the left (or southern) side of the back courtyard. In the centre of the top floor we can find a huge bell of one and a half metres in diameter and as high as 2.2 meters. It is decorated with three rows of Vajras (Dorje) and Tibetan mantras. An inscription on the bell reading: 'Presented in the Xuande reign of the Great Ming dynasty' dates its casting to 1427. Just outside that floor, a wooden gallery leads around the tower building and offers a superb view over the architectural body of Qutan Lamasery.

The sublime Ming dynasty architecture of the temple buildings is one of the two main attractions of Gautama Monastery (*Qutan Si*). Another highpoint of a visit to this well-preserved lamasery is represented by its exquisitely done murals. We have mentioned the frescoes which can be contemplated in the main halls, also dating from the early Ming times. Most of the lesser side halls have paintings done during the last dynasty (Qing 1644-1912). Therefore we need not be too vexed that, due to the fact that their doors are mostly locked, visitors ordinarily cannot see the latter. The details of the early paintings are a bit difficult to inspect due to the poor light in the dark main halls.

Besides the paintings inside the hall, we find about 400 square metres of excellent murals under good light conditions: 51 segments of murals painted onto the walls of both wing corridors, extending around the Hall of the Thriving Nation and its courtyard. Most of them were created during the early Ming dynasty and, though they are more than five hun-

dred years old, are still shining as bright as ever. While the paintings of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities inside the main halls demonstrate that they have been worked out in a typically Tibetan way, though Chinese-influenced, we detect the corridor murals as examples of one of the brightest periods of Ming dynasty Buddhist art (15th century), which is unique in Tibet's northeast, and furthermore of great significance for the whole of 'Greater China'. All over the Tibetan Highland there is an obvious change of style in the old paintings starting from an extreme Indian-Kashmiri influence in the far west through central Tibet where we simultaneously find Indian, Nepalese and Chinese influx in elaborate Tibetan painting schools, down to the lower parts of Amdo and Kham where Chinese painting styles became the dominant form. Here on the murals of Qutan Lamasery's corridors we may find the most Chinese-styled murals of Tibetan Lamaism in all the highland. As in famous examples of Chinese landscape painting, the sun, moon, stars, clouds, rain, mountains and rivers, forests and flowers, persons and animals are clearly pictured, with finely contoured palaces and pavilions, and furnishings, carts, processions, worked out in detail. Laid out truly and precisely in distinct different shades, they embody the main topic, the Jatakas. The subject matter is the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni which is done in a serial form—starting from the left side and going clockwise around the yard, which is the ordinary path of worship in Tibetan-Buddhist monasteries.²⁸

Qutan Lamasery still adds some other historical relics to its well-esteemed treasures: several golden and ivory seals presented to Qutan abbots by Chinese emperors, stone tablets manifesting the wish for their long life in Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit, and a stone sculpture of the Tibetan mystic and poet Milarepa are kept in the monastery's precincts. Until recently, not all the precious relics have been shown to visitors, but more and more opens up to the public, welcomed annually for the main festival of this part of Amdo: the Flower Festival (Chin. *Hua'er Jie*). On this occasion, Qutan Lamasery seems to go back to its former importance and splendour as tens of thousands of pilgrims and visitors join the festivities.

2.2. Rgolong Monastery

Hardly known in the West, but rated as one of the most influential lamaseries in the area, Rgolong²⁹ monastery is of major historical importance both for

Amdo and the old Chinese Empire. This monastic centre of the Tu nationality, or Monguor, is situated in a gorge of Daban Shan, a mountain range that stretches between Xining and northeastern Qinghai's Datong River. There are several possibilities to reach there from Xining—the shortest one measuring 65 km and leading out of the city by going eastward in the direction of Lanzhou. As soon as the town of Ping'an is entered, one has to head north past the red cliff that towers above Huang Shui River. Some 15 km north of Ping'an there is a right-turn near Wushi village, and a seven kilometre dirt road leads to Rgolong monastery. From Weiyuan, which is the seat of Huzhu Autonomous county of the Tu people and therefore also called Huzhu town, Rgolong is about 40 km to the southeast. The shortest way from Xining to Huzhu-Weiyuan leaves Huang Shui Valley in the eastern suburbs of the provincial capital and follows one of its tributaries for 30 km.

A slight detour, but more interesting variant, is heading for Datong north of Xining, but turning east in Changning village (25 km). A mountain road takes you to 20 km distant Huzhu, but you may stop for a while at Wufeng village. In a cliff of a mountain having the same name ('Five Peaks'), high above the fields, there is Wufeng Temple. Situated at a height of 2800 m, it has an attractive setting in lush vegetation, and the rebuilt halls of the 18th century temple offer a fair playground for the annual *Huar* Festival³⁰ on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month: that is when Tu people, Hui Muslims, Tibetans and Han-Chinese gather around the Bodhisattva hall (*Pusa Dian*) or the Dragon King's Palace (*Longwang Gong*) to sing and feast together.

Rgolong is well known throughout Qinghai province by its Chinese name, *Youning Si*, the 'Peace-protecting Temple'. The monastery's appellation Rgolong or—in older sources—*Erh-ku-lung*, is derived from Tibetan Gönlung (*dgon lung*), meaning the 'hermitage (*dgon*, monastery) valley' (*lung pa*). The full name of the monastic complex is Gönlung Jampa Ling (*dgon lung byams pa gling*), 'Temple of Maitreya in the monastery valley'. There is no proper name in the language of the Tu people, though they modify the Tibetan word into Rgolong or Regulong.³¹

Founded in 1602 or 1604, the early history and development of Rgolong monastery is quite unclear, but overlaid with legends, which are told by Schram:³²

The saying goes that during the Yüan period (1280-1368) a Buddha appeared to a holy lama of the Sa-skya Sect, called Diasai, absorbed in profound meditation, and ordered him to build a monastery in Huangchung [Tsongkha] on a site he designated. The next day the lama started his journey. He wandered many years in order to find the indicated site. Finally he recognized it at Erh-ku-lung [Rgolong] and the Monguors started building a hermitage. A handsome, very intelligent young man of Erh-ku-lung, called Sumpa, asked the lama to accept him as his apprentice and to instruct him. The happy holy man devoted his energy and marvelous ability to educating the young man. More young recruits arrived. The holy lama returned to Tibet with two of the most intelligent novices, one called Chang-chia³³ and the other T'u-kuan [Tuguan]. He entrusted the task of caring for the monastery in the meantime to the young Sumpa. The lama died in Tibet and the two novices, after brilliantly completing their studies in Tibet and writing learned books, returned to Erh-ku-lung, performed miracles, and died at the same time as Sumpa. All three were reincarnated and became the celebrated three Living Buddhas, who are the co-proprietors and chiefs of Erh-ku-lung.

At that time a lama of Erh-ku-lung, born in the neighbourhood of Chie-bzan, enjoyed the reputation of holiness. After his death he was reincarnated at Erh-ku-lung as the Living Buddha Chie-bzan [Chubsang]. Another holy lama, born in Har-ch'in (Liao tung), called Wang, died and was reincarnated at Erh-ku-lung as the Living Buddha Wang. These two smaller incarnations, in conjunction with the three former incarnations who received the title *Hutukhtu* from the emperor, constitute the board of the monastery, called 'wu-tan-nang', which is still in existence.

Another legend explains the foundation of Rgolong Lamasery by a story connecting it to the recovery of one of the first Dalai Lamas, who lay dying on his bed in Lhasa.³⁴ It is interesting though that this important lamasery was built at the time when representatives of the three big Gelugpa monasteries of Ganden, Sera and Drepung were sent to Mongolia to give their official recognition to Yönten Gyatsho

(1589-1616) as the 4th Dalai Lama. He was the only Mongolian in the row of Lhasa Gelugpa theocrats, and at the time he was chosen for it, Mongolians of Amdo and Inner Mongolia rose to the zenith of their power. This seems to be the main reason for the fact that Amdo, except for its southern half, turned to become predominantly Gelugpa, and thereupon was essentially lost for the so-called Red sects. Anyhow, it is obvious that this 4th Dalai Lama encouraged the local people to build a lamasery at Rgolong by dispatching the lama Dönyö Chögyi Gyatsho (*don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho*) in 1604.³⁵

The earlier history of Rgolong Lamasery's thriving had started with the decline of Mongol power in China. After re-establishing an autochthonous Chinese dynasty in 1368, the new authorities of the Ming emperor had only a few Chinese settlers and garrisons posted in main Tsongkha valley between Xining and Lanzhou. On the other hand, the principal military forces of the foregoing Mongol Yuan dynasty certainly had been driven out of China, but as they were still dangerous enemies beyond the frontier areas, the Ming rulers were not confident of their ability to establish direct Chinese control and administration in Mongolia (and the Mongolian part of Amdo). This is why they accepted the submission of individual frontier tribes like the Monguors or Tu people, taking their allegiance as a chance to build up a buffer between China and the Inner Asian world of Mongolia, Turkestan and Tibet. In order to ensure their adherence and permanent allocation to specific territories, the Ming authorities granted special favours to Lamas who were encouraged to found monasteries as administrative nuclei to control the tribes and collect tributes. This kind of imperial patronage in Amdo made Lamaism flourish luxuriantly and further expand during the subsequent Qing dynasty.³⁶

Most of the lamas of the time had belonged to Red sects, that means many of them could marry and thus could be granted hereditary titles and domains. After the outcome of the reformed Gelugpa School and the honour given to its patriarch by Mongol prince Altan Khan in 1573, the influence of that Yellow sect grew quickly among the Tu population. In 1604 the monastery of Rgolong was founded by the initiative of the 4th Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatsho who had sent a lama to the Monguor community. On the invitation of that lama to be so kind as to build a monastery in their country,³⁷ the construc-

tion of Rgolong started.

According to Xie³⁸ there was a political reason for the Gelugpa's initiative as the reformatory Buddhist order had come under heavy pressure by the well-developing Karma-Kagyüpa sect and the prince of Tsang, Tsangpa Khan. For a while the chances for spreading the Gelugpa doctrines in central Tibet seemed to be very bad:

The rival Red sects were still so aggressive as to dare to build their monasteries close to those of the Yellow sect, and were even able to hinder the lamas of the Yellow sect from attending (1498-1518) the famous sMon lam New Year religious festival, instituted by Tsong khapa himself. In 1537 eighteen monasteries of the Yellow sect were destroyed.³⁹

Just in case the monks of the Gelugpa order could not make their way and the principal monasteries of Drepung, Sera and Ganden were not in the position to protect the Dalai Lama from Tsangpa Khan's infringements, it was decided to instigate the foundation of a large monastic centre in Amdo. The loyalty of the Mongolian tribes to a Dalai Lama of Mongol origin was quite certain, and Lamaism among them had got a new impulse some one or two decades before through the support of Inner Mongolian prince Altan Khan. The Gelugpa hierarchy asked the sedentary Tu people rather than the nomadic Mongolian tribes to build a monastery, and Rgolong soon became the religious and administrative centre of the area. The reason for its thriving is obvious. By the assistance of prince Gushri Khan, the Yellow sect was successful in central Tibet. Its monasteries Drepung and Sera were on best terms with the newly built Amdo lamasery, and thus many of Rgolong's high incarnations originated from Drepung where they got an excellent training—just to become high-ranking lamas of Rgolong.

At the end of the Ming dynasty (1643), Qutan Lamasery with more than 600 monks, and several branches housing another 350, was the leading monastery in Tsongkha. Already after less than a century, Rgolong had surpassed all other monasteries of the region. In 1723, the lamasery was inhabited by 2,500 monks and had established not less than 42 satellite monasteries and temples, more or less all the monasteries north of Huang Shui. Rumour had it that at the time of the 3rd Sumpa Khutukhtu

(1704-1788) there were more than 6,000 or even 7,000 monks in Rgolong, with 22 incarnations (tulku) among them.⁴⁰ It is very likely that this high number of monastery residents may be explained by the strange way of counting them by ‘shares’,⁴¹ or, somehow the monks of the satellite monasteries have been added to it. Some of the latter developed alike, so as to have populations between 10 to 100 monks in the smaller, and 700-800 (Qijia Si, Chubsang Gompa, Tiantang Si, Shimen Si) up to 2,000 (Guomang Si) in the bigger subordinate monasteries. Before 1950, there were 49 monasteries being administered by Rgolong, and two of these were located as far away as Xinjiang.⁴² Without doubt the lamasery profited by the names of its prominent and learned lamas to whom domains were given, owing to their activities in inducing Tibetans to submit to the Manju-Chinese empire.⁴³

It was at the beginning of the 18th century, during the Yongzheng reign of the Qing, that the leading Mongol prince of Kokonor area, Lobsang Tendzin, rose against Manchu-Chinese overlordship, and the monks and lamas of Rgolong stood by his side. That is why, in 1724, a Chinese punitive expedition burned down this lamasery and many others as well. But as Rgolong’s highest incarnation, Tuguan Khutuktu, who mostly resided in Beijing, was in high esteem at the imperial court, the lamasery was rebuilt in 1732-1733. Then it received, by the emperor’s decree, the state-official name of *Youning Si*. The importance of the monastery derived from its reputation as an abode of scholarship. The fourth-highest incarnation of the lamaist Gelugpa world, the Chankya Khutuktu (*lcan skyā*, 1641-1713), residing in Beijing’s Yonghegong Temple, was a Mongolian native of Amdo and high scholar of Rgolong Lamasery. The forefathers of the first Chankya Khutuktu came from an area named ‘grey pastures’ (*lcan skyā*), a circumstance that led to the boy recognized as the *Dharmasvamin* incarnation of Rgolong being given that name. At the age of eight years, the tulku was brought to the lamasery, then sent to Tibet for further studies, only to be summoned to the imperial court in Beijing as soon as he returned to Amdo. Travels in Mongolia, central Tibet and Amdo convinced him of the need to reform the study programme of monasteries like Rgolong and others, in 1709.

During Muslim uprisings in China’s northwest, in 1866 and 1895 to 1896, the monastery was again

destroyed,⁴⁴ only to be rebuilt again under the surveillance of the 6th Tuguan Khutuktu, who returned home from Beijing in 1915. Rgolong never really recovered from the devastations, and on the eve of the Communist seizure of power, Rgolong housed some 300 monks and just several lamas, nearly all of them being Tu nationals.⁴⁵ During the Cultural Revolution Rgolong was partially destroyed, since 1980 restored, 1981 visited by the Panchen Lama and 1984 re-opened. In 1996 it again housed some 300 monks, one high lama and several tulku, all of them being Tu people. They have their own language, are capable of reading the scriptures in Tibetan, but many of them are not able to speak it.⁴⁶

The layout of the lamasery is in accordance with the requirements for the choice of the location of a Buddhist temple or monastery. It lies at the bottom of a solitary, forested valley. Opposite the valley entrance, on the other side of the small river, a big white chörten and a small segregated temple (the gönkhang) announce the presence of the lamasery even before its residential houses and temple halls can be seen.

Parts of the monastic complex are built onto the lower slopes, with some structures sticking to the cliffs of *Tuguan ula* (Chin. *Tuguan Shan*) mountain that towers above the monastery’s northern side.⁴⁷ The whole complex is facing south with the main entrance on the western side. Restoration work in 1990 had a Tsongkhapa hall rebuilt, while the main assembly hall (*dajingtang*) was still under construction. On the back side of the latter, a lesser hall served as lhakhang. Further up, on the same axis, the little Hall of White Tara, Dölkar Lhakhang, is reached. Amidst the houses of common monks and scattered across the slope of Tuguan mountain, there are 14 tulku residencies (*fofu*), among which five serve the highest incarnations bearing the khutuktu title. In former times, i.e. before its first destruction in the 18th century, the living quarters of the monks comprised some 390 courtyards.

The first temple to be visited is the small lhakhang (*xiaojingtang*, ‘Little Sutra Hall’) situated at the bottom of the valley. It is a Tibetan-style building carrying a two-layered gable and hip roof of grey tiles. On the lower roof above the door are the wheel of the dharma and two deer—symbol of Buddha’s first preaching in Sarnath—and two gyaltshen, gilded round standards symbolizing the victory of the

Dharma. Entering the hall, a throne for Jamyang Rimpoché, Labrang Monastery's highest incarnation, is first to be noticed in the centre of the back wall, with books and a shrine with different small statues on the left side. To the right we can see the only mural, a painting of Yama, the wrathful master of Death, in his form without bull-head. The main images at the back are statues of Kalacakra, Jowo Shakyamuni, Guhyasamaja and Vajrasattva to the left side of the throne, while the five meditational buddhas (or *Dhyani Buddhas*) are to the right. There is also a small shrine, sheltering a remarkable bronze of Manjushri, the bodhisattva's head capped with a skull crown.

The main assembly hall (*dajingtang*) at the foot of the mountain slope, a large two-storeyed building topped by Chinese roofs, was rebuilt in 1990-1996. The outfitting of the interior was not yet complete in 1996, but especially the back side of the hall was replete with altars full of stupas and images. Starting from the left side of the back, we see a chörten and a new statue of Manjushri—extraordinary as the bodhisattva is seated in a 'Western' posture usually typical of Maitreya. His emblems, the book and the sword that cuts the darkness of ignorance, are clearly visible, though. Following are images of Shakyamuni and of a wrathful form of Manjushri—again with dharmapala crown, as seen in the lhakhang already. To his right, a statue called *Kyo Nangtu* is considered as a buddha, with lotus flowers at his sides, sitting with one leg set upright, the left hand raised, and wearing a very ornate bodhisattva crown. As the rest of the image is entirely covered by cloth and khatags, it is difficult to identify. It reminds one that originally there was a big bronze statue in the main assembly hall depicting the Yuan general *Gerilite*, who is venerated as Nida by the Tu people, personifying their earliest ancestor and local protector god.

Furthermore, a big Shakyamuni image is to be seen in the main assembly hall, with three smaller images in front of it (one Shakyamuni, two Manjushri), and two glass shrines sheltering statues of Tsongkhapa. There are some interesting cult images around the throne of the lamasery's highest incarnation, with a Vajradhara and a beautiful small stone-carved Amitabha to its left and a painting of the Gelugpa order's *tshogs shing*⁴⁸ at the back side, depicting the whole religious, philosophical, cultural, and

historical synthesis achieved by Tsongkhapa and embodied in the order he founded. The right side of the altar has images of Shakyamuni, a stupa, quite a big statue of Vijaya (*gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma*), and Amitabha, with two glass shrines in front of them displaying huge tshatshas of Avalokiteshvara and of Maitreya.

The old assembly hall originally contained a giant silk thangka of Maitreya, more than ten metres long and several metres wide. Twice a year, at a ceremony called *dšamba sguni dielgē*,⁴⁹ it was unrolled from the top of the main temple's roof to be hung above the courtyard where the ceremonies are held. This happened after the Cham dances were performed in the first lunar month and during the Tu people's Huar Festival. The rites have been revived, with mask dances being staged during the first, third and fourth lunar months.

Scriptures play a big role in the fittings of Rgolong monastery. The large assembly hall is supposed to shelter a handwritten edition of the canonical writings, completed during the early Ming dynasty.⁵⁰ Heavy copies of the sacred books of Kanjur and Tanjur are put up along the side walls. Once pilgrims carried them on their back around the sanctuary. Doing this meant to them that they will get rid of some sorrow or trouble, or they wish to fulfill a vow.⁵¹

In 1710, the emperor contributed to the foundation of a Tantric college in Rgolong.⁵² All in all, the lamasery possessed four study faculties. Besides Tantra the monks had the possibility of studying Buddhist scriptures and philosophy, astronomy (kalacakra) and medicine.⁵³ Due to the scholarship emanating from these colleges, especially of their prominent and wise lamas, Rgolong monastery benefited that way and for a long time it surpassed all other monasteries in Tsongkha. Symbols of this erudition are a number of books that were composed by the highest incarnations of this lamasery. The 3rd Chankya Khutukhtu Rolpe Dorje (1717-1786) dedicated his life to the translation of treatises concerning language and script. Furthermore he rendered the Buddhist canon into Mongolian, while the 3rd Tuguan Khutukhtu Lobsang Chögyi Nyima (1737-1802) portrayed the origin of all the sects of Lamaism, and wrote about Bön religion and Daoism (old spelling: Taoism) as well. Another important work is the 3rd Sumpa Khutukhtu (1704-1788)

Yeshe Panchur's *History of the Rise and Downfall of Buddhism in India and Tibet*.⁵⁴

The residencies of incarnated lamas, formerly up to 14 with five of them being among the most important in the Gelugpa hierarchy of Amdo and China,⁵⁵ are mostly located on the slope and even in the cliffs of Tuguan mountain, high above the monastery. Most interesting is a yellow building on the upper left side of the precipice which is the prayer hall of Tuguan Khutukhtu. Inside we find three thangkas that might be somewhat older. While one of them depicts Manjushri, the other two portray the 1st Tuguan lama, having a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintamani*) in his left hand, and the 2nd Tuguan respectively, with vajra and bell. At the foot of the steep hillside and across from the main assembly hall, there is Kyasi Tulku's residence with a stone footprint of Karma Rolpe Dorje, and handprints of a Panchen lama on a thangka. Of the five existing main incarnations of Rgolong, four are presently in Amdo, while the Chankya Khutuktu followed Chiang Kaishek's KMT to Taiwan in 1949. In 1996 Tu monks of Youning Si told that the present Tuguan Khutukhtu was seventeen years old and studying at Gansu's Labrang monastery.

About 4 km east of Rgolong, further up the valley in a lovely forested location, a hermitage is found on the upper hillside, Tianmen Si. It was established by Sumpa Khutukhtu of Rgolong. In the main Buddha hall is the reliquary stupa of the 3rd Sumpa and in the hall of the upper level an armour of a Qing general who—according to tradition—lost it here when running away. The story has it that after destroying Rgolong monastery he had moved towards Tianmen Si and shot an arrow. As the monastery's protectors then stood up against him, the mountain started to quake—making the frightened Chinese general run away.

2.3. Serkhog Monastery (Guomang Si)

Once being one of the most famous monasteries in Amdo, it has become somewhat difficult to find the location of this important lamasery.⁵⁶ It is located in the north of Xining's Datong county, in Yamenzhuang village of Dongxia Xiang. One of the reasons for this difficulty is its many different names: Guomang Si, Zanbu Si, Saisehe Si and Guanghui Si in Chinese, or Tsenpo Gön, Ganden Damchö Ling as well as Serkhog Gompa in Tibetan. Nowadays it is most easily found by its Chinese name of

Guanghui Si, and by driving from Xining to Qiaotou (Datong county town), where one should turn northeast and pass by the northern side of the bizarre mountain ridge of Laoye Shan.⁵⁷ Some 18 km further the last remains of the once huge monastery will be reached.

The very capable and intelligent first administrator of Rgolong Lamasery, Sumpa Damchö (*sum pa dam chos*), founded a number of satellite monasteries in the Tsongkha area. As early as 1604, i.e. about the time of Rgolong's construction, he established a hermitage in Pari (*dpa' ri*), the Haomen or Datong River valley north of Weiyuan (Huzhu). In 1649 to 1651 he sent his Mongolian vice-administrator, Tsenpo Döndrub Gyatsho (*don grub rgya mtsho*), to neighbouring Datong County (to the west of Weiyuan) to build what later became the famous monastery of Serkhog, Ganden Damchö Ling (*dga' ldan dam chos gling*). The patron for this foundation was Sechen Hungtaiji. As Döndrub Gyatsho was also called the Lama Tsenpo, another appellation of the monastery was Tsenpo Gön (*bTsan po dGon*), and as it is located in a place called Serkhog it is named Serkhog Gompa (*gSer khog dGon pa*) as well.

The first abbot of Serkhog, Trinle Lhündrub (1622–1699), was born in today's Haiyan, a region extending between Tsongkha and Lake Kokonor. When young he went to Tibet where he studied in the Gomang college (*sgo mang grva tshang*) of Drepung monastery. From 1652 to 1664 he officiated as khempo of that college. On request of the Mongol prince Morgen Hungtaiji, the 5th Dalai Lama bestowed the title of Mindröl Nomun Khan on the lama and sent him to Serkhog. Only then was the place called *Guomang Si* in Chinese—after Drepung's Gomang college. The lamasery was greatly increased by the lamas Nomonhan Trinle Lhündrub (*no mon han ngag dbang 'phrin las lhun grub*) and Chubtsang Tulku Tengyen (*chu bzang sprul sku bstan rgyan*).⁵⁸ Guomang Si flourished so fast as to have, on the eve of the Mongolian prince Lobsang Tendzin's revolt in 1723,⁵⁹ about 2,000 monks, 18 tulkus, and three study colleges. Very soon it must have become an autonomous monastery and developed to such an extent as to administer nine subsidiary monasteries of its own.⁶⁰ Like Rgolong, Gomang Monastery was destroyed in 1724 by a Chinese punitive expedition against Lobsang Tendzin and the lamaseries supporting him.⁶¹ Yet, as Rgolong's high-

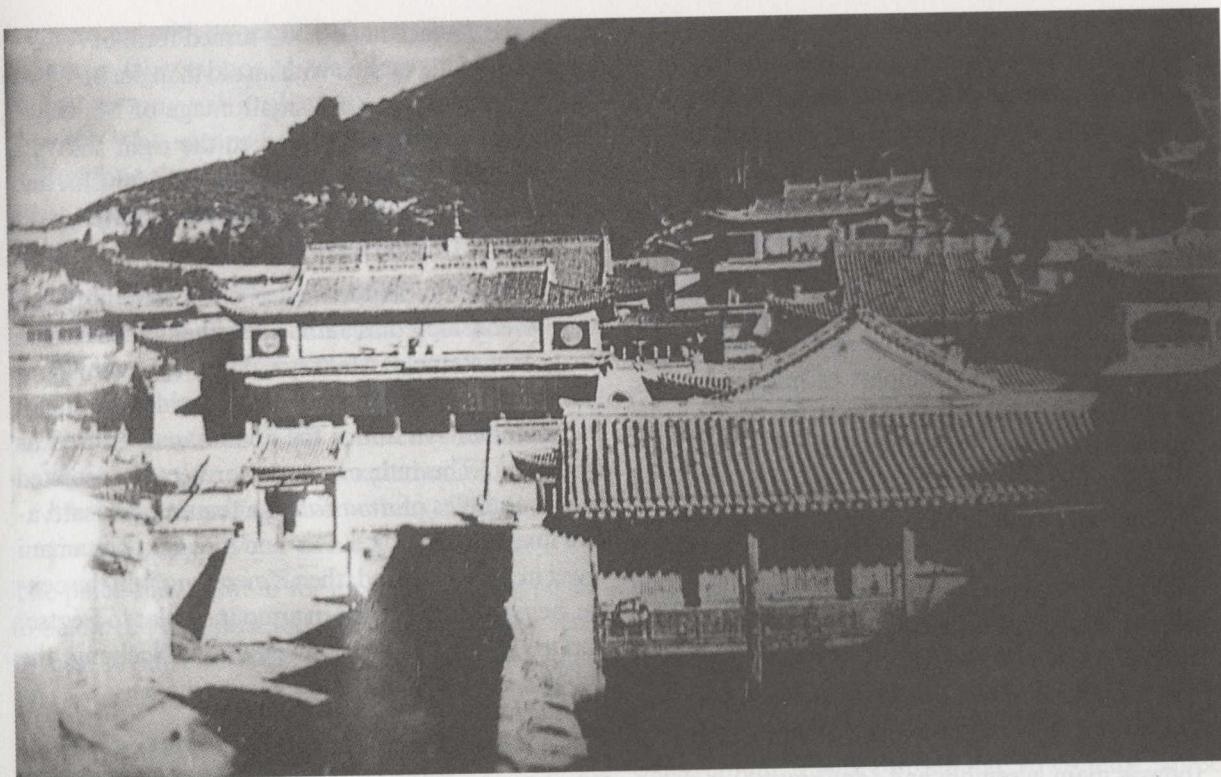


Plate 2. Serkhog Monastery (before 1959)

est incarnation, the Tuguan Tulku was in high esteem at the imperial court in Beijing, Gomang was to be rebuilt soon, and money for reconstruction was donated by the emperor.

Restoration work was mostly done through the 2nd Mindröl Lobsang Tendzin Gyatsho (1700-1736). Then, in 1731, the lamasery was given, by the emperor's decree, the state-official name Guanghui Si. Unlike Rgolong, the teaching efforts in Guomang Si increased after reconstruction so that its fame was soon greater than ever before. Five colleges (*dratshang, grva tshang*) were built, namely two very renowned Tshennyi Dratshang (*mtshan nyid grva tshang*) and others called Menpa (*sman pa*), Gyüpa (*rgyud pa*) and Ngagdra (*sngags grva*). Mindröl Khutukhtu (*smin grol ho to ko tu*) became one of the most important and influential incarnation lines residing in Beijing. This is why, for a while, Gomang Monastery's importance in Amdo was rated second only to Rgolong.⁶²

The importance of Guomang Si originated in the reputation of one of its abbots, the 2nd Mindröl Khutukhtu Lobsang Tendzin Gyatsho. In 1727 this high incarnation and very learned lama was sent, by

the Dalai Lama, to the imperial court in Beijing, where he was showered with gifts. The emperor bestowed on him the title of khutukhtu and assigned to him the duty of an 'Assistant of the Consistorial Administration of the Lamas and their Monasteries at the capital'. He thus became one of the great tulku of the Tsongkha area. Tsenpo Nomun Khan of Amdo, a later Mindröl incarnation who died in 1839, even enlarged this title's fame and importance by composing the celebrated *Mirror which illuminates all the Inanimate and Animate Things and explains fully the Great World* (Tibetan title⁶³: '*dzam gling rgyas bshad*).

Gomang monastery's most revered image was a statue called Tagtse Jowo (*stag rtse'i jo bo*) that was brought from Tibet during the time of Tsenpo Nomun Khan's former incarnation and which bestowed blessings. The monk assembly of almost 2,000 students (*slob gnyer*) at the beginning of the 19th century⁶⁴ had shrunk to just some 200 monks and about ten lama incarnations on the eve of the Chinese Revolution. Famous among them was Sharira Pandita who looked after branch monasteries all over Amdo's grasslands and in Mongolian regions of northern Xinjiang.

What is left today of Serkhog Gön seems to be a tiny fraction of the formerly large lamasery which extended over most of the hillside behind Yamen-zhuang village. Two old black-and-white photos attached to the pillars in the assembly hall give an impression of the former glory. Facing east, the monastery had sutra halls, temples for Jowo Shakyamuni, Tsongkhapa and protector deities, and residencies of 18 tulkus, not to speak of ordinary monks' quarters. The whole complex was enclosed by an obviously strong rampart of mud and posts with prominent bastions and a single narrow gate.⁶⁵ Remainders of these fortifications can still be seen on a ridge behind the fields surrounding today's temple and residencies, and they probably have been built or renewed after the demolitions of the 1866 Muslim rebellion. The subsequent reconstruction had produced a magnificent new hall of five storeys, one temple and 500 monks' cells. This again was lost in the sixties of the 20th century when the Chinese Cultural Revolution swept through Amdo.

Today's main assembly hall (*dajingtang*) is positioned in the middle of a courtyard enclosed by a huge mud wall. Like the gate through which the courtyard is entered, the main building and two pavilion-like lhakhangs to its sides are built in Chinese style: brick walls between wooden poles and covered by a two-layered gabled and hipped roof [Chin. *xieshan* roof]. Before entering the assembly hall, one passes by an old Chinese stele (reading *Guanghui Si*) and in between two Tibetan snow lions made of stone. The new paintings of the vestibule and inside the main hall are of typical Amdo style—painted on canvas that is spread across and fixed to the walls⁶⁶—and nicely done. With the four guardian kings on the outer walls, the inner walls start with an impressive Shambhala painting on the left side. The battle for Shambhala's victory is put in the centre, while the mythical kingdom itself is shown in the upper left corner. Following is a shrine with numerous small Tsongkhapa statues. The back-side of the hall behind the main altar is also covered with murals, depicting (from left to right) Maitreya, Amitabha, the Gelugpa *tshogs shing*,⁶⁷ Shakyamuni, and the Medicine Buddha, while there are two statues of Jowo in the centre; one is called Jowo Shakyamuni while the other is designated as Jowo Ramoche. To the left we can see statues of Amitayus and Tsongkhapa accompanied by his two main disciples, and in front of them images of Padmapani

and of the 11-faced and 1000-armed form of Avalokiteshvara. Side by side with an old thangka of White Tara there is a beautiful small image of Maitreya, and a votive stupa. The wall to the right shows a painting of Green Tara and statues of Manjushri and Palden Lhamo in front of it, again followed by a shrine with Tsongkhapa images.

The small building to the left of the assembly hall may be considered as Jampe Lhakhang, as its main image is a statue of Maitreya. The one on the opposite side of the *dajingtang*, with a small painting of Padmasambhava above the door-frame, is used as gönkhang. The rather unusual protectors depicted here are statues of *Ama Tama*, a female bodhisattva-like image, riding on a deer and having a cintamani jewel in her right hand; then *Kawadong*⁶⁸ in the centre, being a wrathful god in armour similar to Begtse, and to the right is the oracle deity of Nechung, the six-armed god Pehar riding a snow-lion.

2.4. White Horse Temple of Martsang Drag

When driving by car or going by train from Lanzhou to Xining, in Ping'an, some 35 km ahead of Qinghai's provincial capital, there is a red sandstone cliff to be seen on the right-hand side, just near the northern bank of Tsong Chu river. In the lower part of this red crag, towering just about 2 km north of Ping'an county town, the buildings of a small temple cling to the rocks. It is called Baima Si, Temple of the White Horse, a name which was explained by locals as Rockhill⁶⁹ hands it down to us:

Long ago a herd of horses were grazing on the top of this cliff, and among them a mare with a blind white colt. For some prank the mare reprimanded him, when, not recognizing his parent's voice, he kicked her. Hardly had he done so than his sight was restored; he saw his wickedness, and, filled with shame, threw himself from the cliff and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. To commemorate this act of self-destruction in vindication of the claims of filial devotion, the White Horse Temple was built on the spot where the colt met with his death.

The cliff's name in Tibetan is Martsang Drag, and therefore the temple's name is Martsang Gompa (*dmar gtsang dgon pa*).⁷⁰ Yet, its historical importance is not produced by the legend which attributed a name to the temple, but by the story that

is connected with its origin.⁷¹ According to tradition the three Tibetan monks Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal (*gtsang rab gsal*) and Yo Gejung (*g.yo dge 'byung*), who escaped from the great persecution of Buddhists by King Langdarma in 841, fled from Tibet, taking with them the Holy Scriptures of the Dharma:

... they reached the land of Hor. They had the intention of introducing the Doctrine into this land of a different race and language, but were unable of doing this. So they went to P'e-ro-tsha-tshon in the southern Amdo and again gave themselves up to meditation in the Ma-lung-dorje-t'ag-ra-an-chung-nä-dzong-t'ar-rig-çel-gyi-yang-gön.⁷²

The place they went to for meditation is supposed to be the red cliff near today's Ping'an county seat. In their advanced age they still got a disciple named Möpa, as he had an inborn inclination to the Faith:

And, at the very place he was made a novice, [*g*]Tsang [*rab gsal*] having become his principal, and [*g*]Yo [*dge 'byung*]-his teacher. He received his religious name from both principal and teacher and was called Geva-rab-sal [*dge ba rab gsal*]. Later on, owing to his sublime mind, he became known as Gong-pa-rab-sal [*dgongs pa rab gsal*] 'he with sublime thoughts'.⁷³

After a number of problems were solved, Möpa could be ordained as a monk. Thereafter he himself taught ten disciples coming from central Tibet, sent them back to the provinces of Ü and Tsang to teach the Dharma and thus contributed to the renaissance of the Buddhist Doctrine in Tibet. That is why the monk Gongpa Rabsal,⁷⁴ by which name Möpa became known, is considered as an authoritative advocate of the Dharma in eastern Tibet (*Dokham*). In his old age Lachen Gongpa Rabsal is supposed to have reached the present place of Martsang Drag that subsequently was called Vajra Cliff (*rdo rje brag* in Tibetan and *Jingang Ya* in Chinese). As Gongpa Rabsal died here, having fulfilled the entrance to Nirvana, his followers and the faithful built a temple to his memory, the Temple of the Vajra Cliff, Chin. *Jingang Ya Si*. Its foundation is believed to have been undertaken in the 10th century. It was also destroyed during the punitive exeditions of the Qing emperors in the 19th century.

In spite of its historical relevancy, Baima Si is a small temple with just two monks belonging to the local Tu population. As 'the complete remains of Lachen Gongpa Rabsal, which are truly great in bestowing blessings',⁷⁵ are resting here, the small and prosaic halls of the temple are frequently visited by faithful Buddhists of the Tsongkha area, be they Tu, Tibetans, or Han-Chinese. Formerly there was a statue of the eminent monk made of mud and medical herbs, which was well known for its miraculous powers.

The architecture of the small Baima Si is still imposing, as its Chinese-style building with a two-layered roof (rebuilt in 1984) clings to the vertically rising rocks of Martsang Cliff. Just the main chamber of worship in the three-storied hall is of interest, with a quite beautiful image of a four-armed Avalokiteshvara with six faces in the centre of the altar. To his right there are statues of the three Tibetan monks who had fled from Tibet in 841: Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung. Three additional figures to the left depict Pälgyi Dorje, the famous murderer of King Langdarma, and two Chinese monks who had taken part in the ordination of Möpa, the late Gewa Rabsal.

A unique feature of Baima Si is a rock-cut image of a Buddha Maitreya, beneath the temple and some 200 m to its left. As it is facing Tsong Chu river, people of the area designate it as *Mila wang he*-Maitreya looking at the river. Carved out of the reddish stone, the 3.7 m high rock statue stands on a 2.35 m wide pedestal. It is of an archaic simplicity, its shape and outlines roughly hewn. The buddha's left hand is holding the beggar's bowl, while the right hand, in an encouraging gesture (*abhayamudra*), is inviting the faithful to approach. Chinese scientists date the carving of the image to the Tang dynasty (between 7th and 10th century).⁷⁶

Not far to Ping'an's southwest lies the village of Taktser (Chin. *Hongya cun*), the birthplace of the 14th Dalai Lama. The house of his parents was reconstructed in 1986, representing a remarkable example of a landlord's home.

2.5. Shyachung Lamasery (Bya Khyung)

Although overlooking the Ma Chu (Yellow River) in the distance, famous Shyachung or Jachung Lamasery (*bya khyung dgon pa*) may be considered

as a part of Tsongkha, for its links with Tsongkhapa and various branch monasteries of Kumbum are of importance. The lamasery can be reached either from Kumbum via the road heading south for Guide, yet turning east some kilometres after Lajishankou pass is crossed, or from Xining by taking the Lanzhou highway, turning south in Ping'an and heading (39 km) for Tongren. Again after a mountain pass one has to leave the main road, this time in westward direction. The unpaved side road is to be followed for some 9 km before turning south on a dirt road, which is practically impassable when raining, but it offers a magnificent panorama of the surrounding hills and fields. At the tip of this ridge (15 km) lies Shyachung Lamasery, having one of the longest histories in Amdo.

The full name of the monastery is *bya khyung bshad sgrub gling*,⁷⁷ and as *bya khyung* is pronounced as Sh(y)achung in Amdo-Tibetan, it is called *Xiaqiong Si* or *Xiaqun Si* in Chinese. The term means Roc vulture or the gigantic bird Roc, which is a kind of European equivalent to the old Tibetan *khyung*. The monastery was named accordingly as the shape of the surrounding mountains reminds of that mythical bird spreading out its wings and about to take

off. Tradition has it that the buildings of the lamasery are situated on the left shoulder of the mythical bird Roc, thus being 'a residence destined for riding the wind towards the universe and floating to the abode of the gods'.⁷⁸

The monastery's fame is due to the fact that Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), Tibet's great reformer and founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, enjoyed the first years of his monastic education in this place before he left for central Tibet to further his studies. It is not unlikely that the splendid situation of the monastery, high up near the top of a mountain ridge in a marvellous landscape, was the ideal example for inspiring Tsongkhapa's choice of the site for the first monastery of the order he was to establish: Ganden near Lhasa.⁷⁹ No other grand-lamasery of the Gelugpa was established high up at the ridge of a mountain, and it must have been inspiring for the reformer to compare his own monastic centre to the temples where he had started his unrivalled religious career.

The history of Shyachung Gompa reaches back to the first half of the 14th century, and it thus belongs to the oldest monasteries still existing in Tibet's

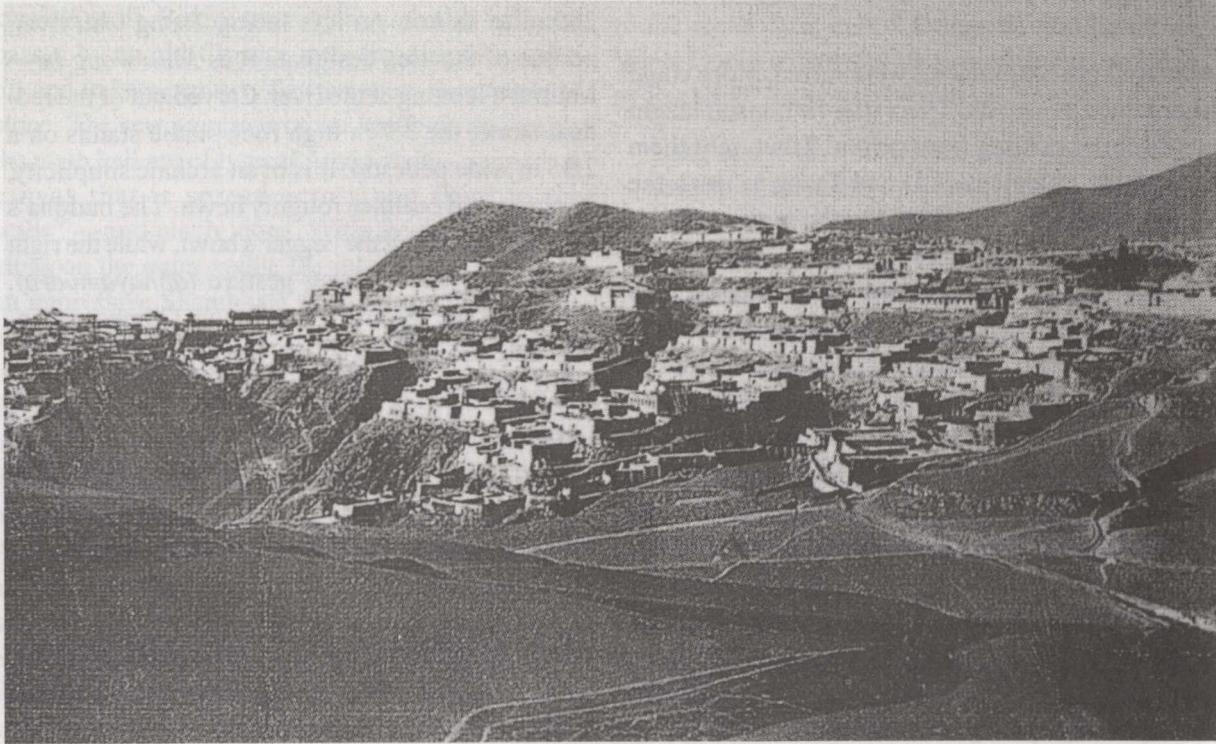
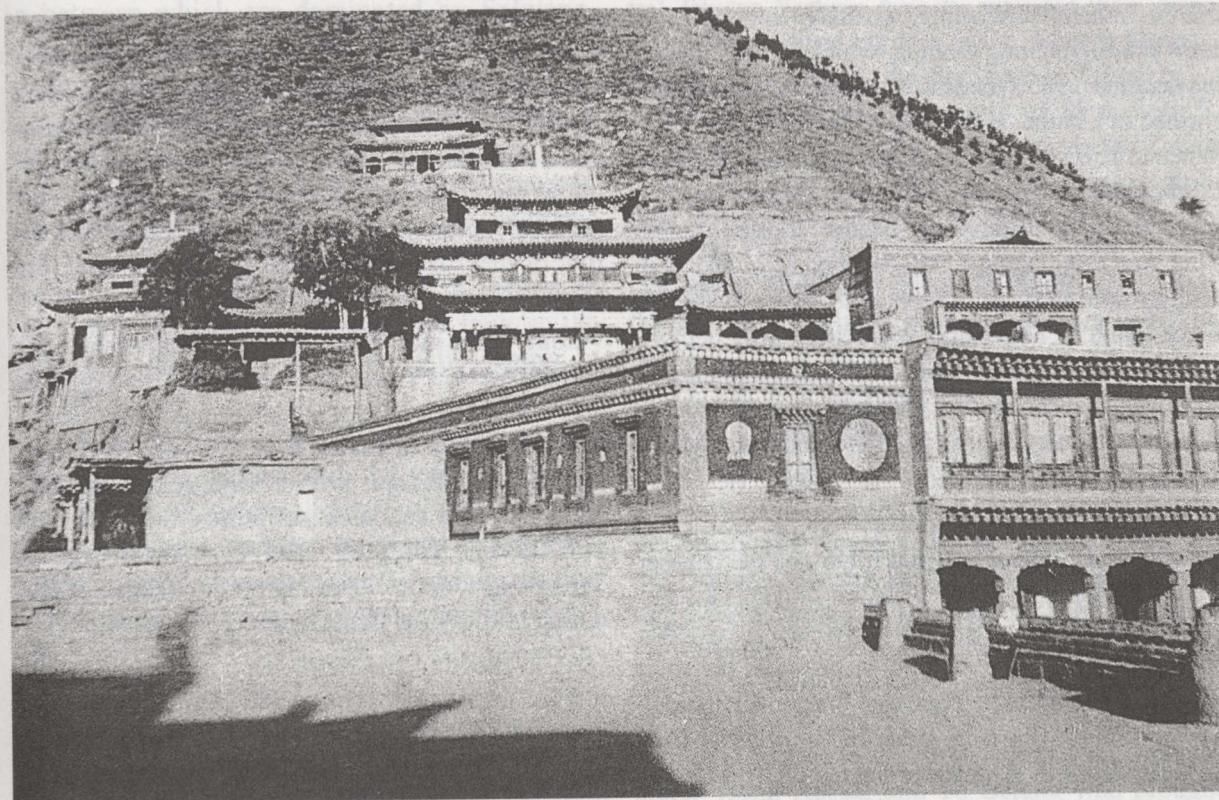


Plate 3-3a. Old photos of Shyachung Monastery (19th to 20th centuries)



northeast. It was founded by Chöje Döndrub Rinchen (*chos rje don grub rin chen*)⁸⁰ not later than 1349 as a monastery of the Kadampa school.⁸¹ In 1363 the father of then Losang Dragpa agreed when Döndrub Rinchen asked him to give his six-year-old son to Shyachung Gompa for religious training. Less than a decade later, in 1371, Losang Dragpa went to central Tibet to continue his studies, where his activities and the effect of his teaching as Tsongkhapa became influential, not just for Amdo. His importance exceeded the bounds of Tibet. When at the age of thirty six he founded the reformatory Buddhist order of the Gelugpa, the 'Model of Virtue', his followers had reason enough to regard Shyachung Gompa as their origin.⁸² Yet, Shyachung kept its status as a Kadampa monastery until the end of the 16th century. After the founding of Kumbum Jampa Ling and the rapid development of the Gelugpa in Amdo, it was associated with Lhasa's Sera Gompa and converted into a Gelugpa lamasery in 1599.⁸³ As some of the most important teachers of the 7th to 10th Dalai Lamas came from Shyachung, its fame reached the imperial court of the Qing dynasty, and beginning in 1788, the monastery received allowances from the imperial treasury in Beijing.

At its heyday Shyachung Gompa extended over an area of about 20 hectares and, besides 2,260 monks' cells, included 27 temple buildings. The small forest on the eastern slope of the ridge above the monastery is said to be formed by Tsongkhapa's hair, like many places here which are related to the great reformer. A legend tells of the hut of Arabatzana in which Tsongkhapa stayed while in Shyachung. As he did not look back when leaving the monastery for central Tibet, his teacher Chöje Döndrub Rinchen took it for disrespect. For this reason, his other disciples wanted to hurl the hut into a pit. They did not succeed, as the hut lifted off the ground and floated in the air. Before Tsongkhapa left he had spoken the holy mantra *A ra ba tza na*, and its magic protected the site which, it is said, was later enclosed in a big *chörten*.⁸⁴

The formerly oldest temples in Shyachung were Gonkhang Chenmo and Lhakhang Chenmo, built in the 14th century. The burial stupa of Tsongkhapa's teacher and founder of the lamasery, Döndrub Rinchen (1309-1385), is also part of the gompa. He was a man of Amdo, too, and as a young boy went to Tsang, where he studied in the monasteries of Nethang, Narthang and Shalu, thus becoming one of the wisest scholars of Tibet. At the age of forty

one his master told him to go back to Amdo and establish Shyachung Gompa, which he did.⁸⁵ After his death in 1385 Döndrub Rinchen's body was enshrined in a stupa, and a temple hall built around it. When in 1583 on his way to Mongolia the 3rd Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatsho passed by Shyachung, he presented gold to have the bronze chörten gilded. This was done again at the beginning of the 18th century with a gift of 25 kg of gold, given by the 7th Dalai Lama.⁸⁶ The temple was rebuilt after demolitions done during the Cultural Revolution, and again houses a stupa reliquary⁸⁷ with large images of Jowo Rimpoché (Shakyamuni), Maitreya and Manjughosa to its sides.

Formerly, the most important temple was mentioned as a Buddha Hall, and it may be the 'Lesser Gold-tiled Temple' which Rockhill said was the finest property of the monastery.⁸⁸ Twenty six wooden temple buildings once stood in between the mud houses of the monks. That was before the monastery was burnt down in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution. With ten of the temples rebuilt after the monastery's reopening in 1980, the most important buildings today are a Tsongkhapa Temple, the Serkhang with its gilded roof, the big assembly hall which was brand new in 1996, and the Temple of Shakyamuni. The site of Tsongkhapa Lhakhang is the location of the young reformer's cottage, the above-mentioned hut of Arabatzana. A green-glazed brick temple topped with a Chinese-style roof—as are the other temples of Shyachung Gompa—is just called Buddha Hall (*fotang* in Chinese). It may be considered as Jampe Lhakhang for it houses a large image of Buddha Maitreya, flanked by statues of Manjushri and Tsongkhapa. The walls are covered by fine new examples of Rebgong painting,⁸⁹ including a long-haired Maitreya to the left. Most of the thangkas hanging around the main image are appliquéd work. The Serkhang—the gilded-roof temple (Chinese *jinwa dian*), is dedicated to the monastery's founder Döndrub Rinchen, who is portrayed by a gilded stucco image.⁹⁰

The main assembly hall (*dajingtang*) is a typical Tibetan-style flat-roofed building of large dimensions and extends to the foot of the main temple complex clinging to the steep mountain slope. When in 1623 the college of philosophy of Shyachung was founded, the dukhang also served this study faculty.⁹¹ Other colleges were established in 1747 (tantric *rgyud pa grva tshang*) and 1797, the latter (medical *sman pa*

grva tshang) was transformed into a Kalacakra institute (*dus 'khor grva tshang*). Thus, all four important branches of Tibetan Buddhist studies were taught in Shyachung. In the course of the centuries quite a number of significant and eminent personalities were educated in its institutes, such as the main administrator of the 7th Dalai Lama, the tutors of the 7th to 10th Dalai Lamas and the 16th Ganden Tripa.⁹²

Some of the most precious treasures of Shyachung Gompa were a statue of Lokeshvara that supposedly contained a relic of Buddha Shakyamuni and a bone of Atisha, a gilded bronze image of Tsongkhapa, and a Kanjur written with golden ink. Besides Buddhist canonical scriptures, the monastery still owns a complete edition of the works of Tsongkhapa, and a 0.8 m high bronze statue of him dating to the Ming dynasty era (1368-1644).⁹³

At its heyday the monastery had some 3,000 monks, although it is not clear if this number included the inhabitants of 20 to 25 subordinate monasteries and temples throughout the region. They were guided by incarnate lamas living in the lamasery's 25 tulku residencies. If 3,000 was the total of residents in Shyachung proper, the number dropped rapidly after the political turbulences in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the end of the 19th century Rockhill noted 1,500 monks in Shyachung, while in 1954 and 1958 there were still about 880 left and 19 tulkus, with 18 subsidiary monasteries. The size of Shyachung Gompa at the time might have reached its present size, as it was in possession of one dukhang and 13 temple buildings. After rapid socialization at the beginning of the 1960s, the number of monks fell to 121 in 1963 and 94 in 1966, when the temple buildings were destroyed.⁹⁴

2.6. Monasteries in Tsongkha

The Tsongkha area of Amdo is remarkable in many respects, and one of the reasons is the circumstance that it has developed to a monastic core more or less totally dominated by the Gelugpa order of Tibetan Buddhism. We not only find some of the largest lamaseries of the entire highland in Amdo, and most of them in Tsongkha and adjacent areas, but they all belong to the so-called Yellow sect. There is hardly any monastery of other Tibetan Buddhist schools to be found in Tsongkha. This is the more surprising as the distance to the Gelugpa's old political and spiritual centres in Ü (*dbus*) and Tsang (*gtsang*) of central Tibet is very big, and there are several regions

in between which are dominated by Sakyapa, Kagyüpa and Nyingmapa monasteries. As we have seen with the history of Tsongkha's most important lamaseries, the reasons for this development lie within the region itself, one of it surely being the fact that the sect's founder was born here. However, the political support of local Mongolian chieftains and the imperial court in Beijing was another essential precondition. It would therefore be rewarding to take a final synoptic look at the evolution and expansion of monastic centres in Tsongkha area.

As far as the early period of the diffusion of Buddhism in Amdo is concerned, the sources are rare, and the lack of historical data is a true handicap hardly permitting assertive statements on the distribution of Buddhist monasteries in Amdo in the first millennium AD.⁹⁵ The proximity to the Silk Road, which had brought the Buddhist Doctrine into northern China probably as early as the 1st century BC, allowed an easy exchange of thoughts between different cultural regions. This suggests the idea that Buddhist monasteries may have been built in Amdo much earlier than in central Tibet. At least we can find remains of Buddhist cave art⁹⁶ in the cliffs of Beishan Si⁹⁷ in Qinghai's capital Xining. They date back to Bei Wei dynasty (386-534), although a temple must have already existed here before that time. As it is near the location of the ancient Chinese city of Xiping⁹⁸, early Buddhism in Tsongkha could have been a matter of sedentary immigrants from northern China, while (proto-) Tibetan tribes still practised Bön religion.

During the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries the valleys of Tsongkha often formed part of proto-Tibetan kingdoms and other principalities which, according to the Chinese model, labelled themselves by Chinese dynastic names such as Late Liang (386-403), Southern Liang (397-414) and Western Wei (535-556). Their realms were focussed on Liangzhou,⁹⁹ a city that was both the most important emporium of foreign traders and, from 345 until 439, the most active cultural centre of Buddhism. The kings of the mentioned dynasties were fervent promoters of the Dharma, had big monasteries and Buddhist grottoes built in the nearby mountains of Nan Shan, whilst Buddhist activities in Tsongkha seem to have been still very limited.

First testimonies of Buddhism in Amdo date back to the 8th century when Tubo emperors of the cen-

tral Tibetan Yarlung dynasty extended their realm beyond the natural borders of the Tibetan Plateau. Records mention, for the first time in Tsongkha, a Buddhist monastery in the city of Shanzhou:¹⁰⁰ Dayun Si, built during the era of Empress Wu Zetian (684-705), most likely was rather a Chinese temple than of Tibetan style. After having come under control of the Tubo Empire, we can be sure that 'Tibetanization' of Buddhism started in Amdo, too. Thus, the Dharma might have been propagated in Tsongkha between 756, when it was taken up by the Yarlung rulers, and 842, the year of King Langdarma's persecution of Buddhists.

Due to the big distance to central Tibet, the persecution by Langdarma did not have a great effect on the situation in Amdo, especially as after his death the Tibetan realm fell apart. Therefore the religious fugitives of Tsang and Ü could find a fertile ground for furthering Buddhist thoughts in Amdo. That was the time, according to legend, when the construction of Ping'an's Baima Si started. Even Dafo Si in Xining is related to the three monks Mar Shakymuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung who brought scriptures, via western Tibet and Hor, to Amdo.¹⁰¹ Hence, the traditional Tibetan differentiation between the early and later propagation of the Doctrine is, as far as Tsongkha is concerned, of no significance, for there were uninterrupted relations with neighbouring Buddhist centres along the Silk Road.

It seems, though, as if monasteries in Tsongkha have stayed small and insignificant for a long time. The earliest temples of importance were established by Gongpa Rabsal, whose life story indicates that Buddhism in the 10th century was just about to spread among Amdo-Tibetans. In consequence of the foresaid, there were only small monasteries of the Nyingmapa, Kadampa and Kagyüpa traditions to be found in Tsongkha, while the close relationship between the Sakyapa and the Mongol emperors appears to have been without greater implications for this part of Amdo.

2.6.1. Dafo Si

In Xining the above-mentioned Dafo Si, Temple of the Big Buddha, was

built by the Mongols, to which was granted during the Hung-wu period of the Ming (1386-99), the inscription 'Pacified Tibetans'... The temple complex in 1915, although in a state of total dilapidation, gave evidence that it must

have constituted a fine monastery in former times. The main temple (two stories high) contained three huge statues of Buddhas, nine meters in height. The ruins of four smaller temples were still in existence, as well as a great number of small rooms, the habitations of the former lamas.

Later, Goorongbzan [Gurong Tsang], the most influential Living Buddha of the Red sect, was in search of an opportunity to retrieve the old glory of his sect, which had been declining and waning on account of the protection and privileges accorded by the emperors ... to the Yellow sect. ... Goorongbzan called ... to obtain the necessary permission to restore the old monastery, which had been administered for centuries by lamas of his sect.¹⁰²

Thus it seems that Xining's Dafo Si, though for centuries being the family temple of the local ruler's Li clan, was a gompa of the old Nyingma order. Its restoration by Goorongbzan failed as all Gelugpa tulku of Tsongkha seem to have protested against it. Finally Dafo Si was confiscated by the government of the Chinese Republic, yet handed over to the Panchen Lama as his residence in Xining. Demolitions of the year 1958 and the Cultural Revolution were partially repaired after its reopening in 1985. The temple buildings stand in the very centre of the city, just at the western side of the provincial government.

At the end of the Yuan dynasty the monastic situation in Tsongkha appears to have been rather unimpressive, with a number of temples and lamaseries of different Buddhist orders, though small ones. The Chinese emperors of the succeeding Ming dynasty who got control of the northeastern parts of Amdo did—like the Mongol Yuan—again protect and promote Lamaism among Tibetans and Mongols. This was not primarily done due to religious motives but in order to hold in subjugation the troublesome tribes of remote border areas—a policy that proved to be less expensive than that of incessant military expeditions.¹⁰³

Reincarnated lamas of Amdo monasteries, especially in the Tsongkha valley, were granted special favours by Ming authorities and encouraged to establish lamaseries ‘which had special functions in administering the tribes and collecting the tribute

that symbolized Chinese rule’. Lamaism in the area was consequently starting to thrive during the Ming dynasty, and continued to flourish until Lobsang Tenzin’s revolt in 1723. The number of monks and lamas north of Huangshui River (Tsong Chu) was very large in proportion to the thin frontier population.¹⁰⁴ The entire Tsongkha valley,

void of monasteries before 1600, became dotted with institutions of the Yellow sect, depending on Erh-ku-lung [Rgolong]. The unusual fervor for the diffusion of Lamaism seems to account for the disappearance of nearly all the small institutions of the Red sect in that country, and their absorption into the fold of the Yellow sect. The forces of expansion radiating from Ch’ü-t’an [Qutan], Sha-ch’ung [Shyachung], and Kumbum situated south of the Hsining River, never before 1723 matched those radiating from Erh-ku-lung.¹⁰⁵

By the end of Qing dynasty, Buddhist orders other than the Gelugpa had virtually disappeared from Tsongkha. In 1980, out of 130 monasteries just six (!) still belonged to the Nyingma tradition and the overwhelming majority, i.e. *all* the remaining gompas, were all owned by the Gelugpa.¹⁰⁶

Along with the monastic centres of Rgolong, Serkhog and Shyachung, the lamasery Chubsang Gompa has long been listed as one of the four great monasteries of the north, a phrase used in Amdo to designate the oldest and most significant Gelugpa lamaseries of the region.¹⁰⁷

2.6.2. Chubsang Gompa

It is located in Nanmenxia village, some 20 km north of Huzhu county seat. The Chinese name *Quezang Si* goes after the Tibetan *Chubsang*. The full monastic appellation is Chubsang Gön Garden Mijur Ling (*chu bzang dgon dga' ldan mi 'gyur gling*).¹⁰⁸ It belongs to those subsidiary monasteries of Rgolong which were founded between 1604 and 1730, when ‘the building of hermitages and bigger monasteries was a real obsession among the prominent lamas and chiefs of the monastery of Erh-ku-lung’.¹⁰⁹ It was first established between 1625 and 1649 by Chubsang Namgyal Paljor (*chu bzang rnam rgyal dpal 'byor*, 1578–1651), a lama of Tölung near Lhasa who had left central Tibet because of his fear of the king of Tsang. He was one of the first incarnate lamas

in Amdo to be bestowed with the title of a khutukhu by the Manchu emperor. Like all other monasteries, Chubsang Gön was destroyed in 1723, and again during the 1872 Muslim revolt. As there were disputes among the three highest tulku of Rgolong, that lamasery's Chankya Khutuktu left his residence with 100 monks and in 1887 had Chubsang Gompa reconstructed instead. As Chankya was most prestigious and influential among Mongols, Chubsang became the wealthiest monastery in Tsongkha at the turn of the 20th century.¹¹⁰

By 1876 Chubsang monastery was described as comprising one main temple surrounded by a mud wall, while the ordinary monks' houses (perhaps 100) were all destroyed. The brick building was constructed in Chinese style, with a sloping roof—as is the one rebuilt in 1985-1988, a two-storeyed assembly hall, but no longer covered with sheets of copper gilt. The main image inside was a seated bronze Shakyamuni of more than four metres height, with numerous smaller bronze statues on the shelves by his sides, all made in Mongolia's most famous workshop at Dolon-nor.¹¹¹ With 800 monks during Lama Tsenpo's time (before 1839) and branches established as far as in Chinese Turkestan, the monastery was no longer large as it had only 150 inhabitants. After reconstruction it got two colleges (philosophy, Kalacakra) and two more temples in addition to the residencies of its nine incarnate lamas. The main hall and the temples were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, but today we still find an older hall belonging to Chubsang Khutuktu's residence. It rises on the left and back side of the assembly hall. Some unusual paintings on wooden screens depict monastic scenes and some deities in a style that seem rather Chinese-influenced. In 1996, again some 29 monks of Tu, Tibetan and Mongol nationalities had returned to the precincts of the monastery. The tradition of unrolling huge thangkas, of mask dances and exhibiting butter sculptures following the 8th, 14th and 15th days of the Tibetan New Year was revived here as well. Some other festivals in honour of Tantric deities like Yamantaka and Samvara are mostly held at certain dates in spring and summer, combined with a large temple fair and market.

From Chubsang Gompa continuing north, the neighbouring region of Pari is reached, where another important branch monastery of Rgolong was founded in the late 16th century—the lamasery of

Xianmi Si or Semnyi Gön (*sems nyid dgon*). It will be discussed later.¹¹² Among the more than 100 monasteries and temples in Tsongkha mentioned in the 1996 edition of Pu Wencheng's *Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of Gansu and Qinghai*¹¹³ we still can make out some other formerly large-sized lamaseries which even had several study faculties. Some of them should at least be dealt with briefly here:

2.6.3. Minhe County (Kamalok)

Lenlhate Ganden Ling (*len lha' te dga' ldan gnas bchu 'phel rgyas gling*), Lianhuatai Si in Chinese, was founded in 1694. Originally it possessed all the four colleges needed for studying in a major lamasery. After demolitions at the end of the 19th century it was left with one college only, and eleven monks until 1954. Since its reopening in 1985, two monks take care of the single reconstructed lhakhang that can be found some 15 km north of Chuankou (Minhe county seat) at Yangjiadian village.¹¹⁴

Thangring Gön (*thang ring dgon dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling*), Longhe Si in Chinese, was founded in 1619, together with establishing an institute for Buddhist philosophical studies. After adding a Tantric college in 1732, this lamasery had 500 to 900 monks at its heyday. With an assembly hall and a temple rebuilt in 1986, there are some 20 monks now. The lamasery is located in Songshan village near Tang'ershan, 28 km southwest of Minhe-Chuankou.¹¹⁵

Khatekha Gompa (*khva ta'i kha'i dgon pa*), Kadiga Si in Chinese, was probably established in 1404-1424, most likely in typical Ming architecture.¹¹⁶ At the time of its flourishing, 13 big and small temple halls were populated by several hundred monks. Destroyed in 1872 and later rebuilt on a smaller scale, the 52 monks of 1949 are succeeded by 15 in today's remaining three temple buildings. Their greatest treasure is a miraculous Tsongkhapa image. The monastery can be reached via Gangou (43 km south of Chuankou) in Jingning village (3 km S).¹¹⁷

Tsheten Gön (*tshe tan dgon dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling*), Caidan Si in Chinese, founded in 1623, was famous for its Jokhang, a temple built in 1666 for the worship of Shakyamuni. Tsheten Gön developed as a political and religious centre of the area. The 5th Tsheten Khempo Jigme Rolpa Lodrö (1910-1985) became one of the most renowned Tibetologists of the PRC. When he died, the monastery

was already reopened, and again some 20 monks live here. Tsheten Gön lies in the southwestern corner of Minhe county, more than 50 km from Chuankou and to the northeast of the Tibetan village of Xing'er.¹¹⁸

Ushidrag Ling (*u shi brag dgon chen bshad sgrub chos 'khor gling*), *Wushigou Si* or *Ya'er Si* in Chinese, is to be found in the valley next to and east of Tsheten Gön, about 10 km northwest of Guanting high up on a precipice. It is supposed to date back to the Ming dynasty's Wanli reign (1573-1620). There are two parts of the monastery lying about one kilometer from each other, the more interesting temple part clinging to the cliff about halfway up the mountain. It is a cluster of buildings which from afar look like a huge hall of six storeys. The third floor is taken up by the assembly hall, while the fourth serves the tulku as residence, with lesser temples on the fifth and sixth. In 1949, the temples were taken care of by 95 monks; today there are just about a dozen.¹¹⁹

2.6.4. Ledu County (Drotshang)

Drotshang Tashilhünpo (*dro tshang dgon bkra shis lhun po*), *Yaocaitai Si* in Chinese (Temple of the altar of medical herbs), is the important branch of Qutan Si¹²⁰ that stepped into competition with its once powerful mother lamasery. Built in 1619 about 10 km up the valley, it rapidly developed as the most important sutra study college of 400 Qutan monks. After the turn of the 20th century it had gradually decreased to 300 (in the 1930s) and 94 monks (1958). On an area of six hectares, there were a main assembly hall, a Jampe Lhakhang (Maitreya Temple) and several tulku residencies. It was destroyed in 1967. After reopening in 1984, the original Kungwa residence was turned into an assembly hall, where 15 monks have gathered again.¹²¹

Tongshag Tashi Chöling (*stong shags bkra shis chos gling*), *Yangguan Si*, *Shoule Si*, *Fuxiang Si* in Chinese, was founded either about 1403-1424 or in 1522, though its regular plan probably dates from early Qing, for at the beginning it was a hermitage and a monastery consisting of tents. Later Gedün Lodrö (b. 1613), a lama of Rgolong, had a Maitreya temple built and, in 1691, the first study college, thus establishing a regular Gelugpa lamasery. It developed to be the biggest gompa of northern Ledu county with some 300 monks and five tulku at its

heyday. The 1958 buildings—a sutra hall of combined Tibetan and Chinese styles, a gönkhang and a large three-storeyed Jampe Lhakhang containing a Maitreya statue of 10 m height—still occupied a surface of two hectares. Before demolition in 1966, there were 45 monks left. 1981 saw the return of 10 monks and one tulku. Tongshag Tashi Chöling is to be found with some difficulty, in a location of 15 km air-distance northeast of Ledu county town, yet more than 25 km by car and by foot (walk starts from Shoule village).¹²²

2.6.5. Ping'an County (Tsongkha khar)

Shadzong Ritrö (*shva rdzong ri khrod dma shva rdzong sgrub sde*), *Xiaozong Si*, *Xiaojun Si* in Chinese,¹²³ is located about 28 km to the southwest of Ping'an town. From Sitai village (of Sanhe community) it lies some 5 km further up the valley, on the steep slope of the mountain Anjili Shan (Tib. Amnye Chi Ri*). Shadzong is related to three other places in Amdo, together called 'the four djung'¹²⁴ [natural chasm] of Amdo', being famous meditation spots of Tibetan monks. According to legend, the famous Chinese pilgrim Fa Xian (337-422) on his way to India stayed here for a while. An existing hermitage was extended about 1127-1130. In 1359 the 4th Karmapa Rolpe Dorje (1340-1383), when on his way to the capital of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, stayed in Shadzong. Here he took the *upasaka* vows of a three-year-old novice then named Künga Nyingpo (*kun dga' snying po*) whom he prophesied to become a second Buddha. The boy later became known as Tsongkhapa.¹²⁵ After the 4th Karmapa's death in 1383, a hermit is said to have built a reliquary stupa for him, and a first temple hall. When in 1746 Kumbum's tulku Losang Künga was abbot at Shadzong Ritrö, he had an assembly hall built that in 1779 was fitted with statues of Shakyamuni, Maitreya and Heruka (*Khro bo me gyo pa*). With Kumbum as its mother lamasery, Shadzong could develop to a relatively big temple having some 40 monks.

There still were 13 monks on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, during which all three building complexes were destroyed. Most interesting was a seven-storeyed structure clinging to the cliff at the place where Rolpe Dorje had his meditation cave. In a square grotto some fragments of murals are still to be seen. Currently there are just two temples rebuilt, with two monks taking care of it.¹²⁶

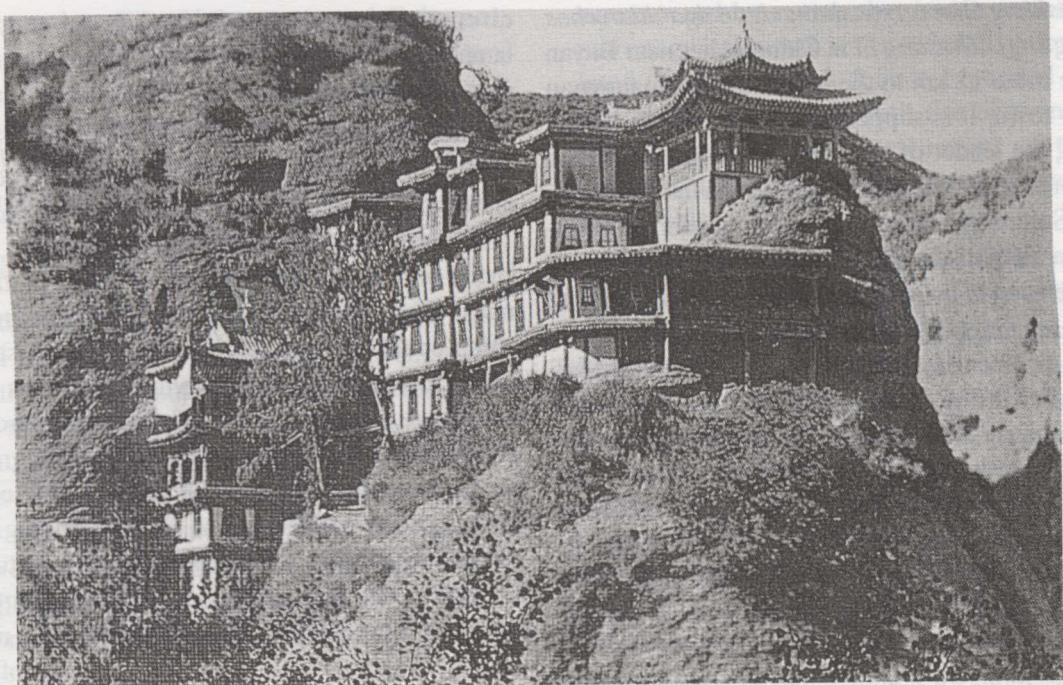


Plate 4. Old photo of Shadzong Ritrö (before 1959)

2.6.6. Huangyuan County (Tongkhor)

Tongkhor Gompa (*stong 'khor dga' ldan chos 'khor gling*), *Dongke'er Si* in Chinese, was founded in 1648. The incarnation lineage of Tongkhor goes back to the 1st Tongkhor Dawa Gyatsho (1476-1556), a native of Tongkhor in Kham, who went to study at the Lesser Tantric college of Sera Monastery near Lhasa. When the 3rd Dalai Lama left to Amdo to meet Mongolian prince Altan Khan, the 2nd Tongkhor Yönten Gyatsho was with him. Contacts to the Mongol Tümed tribe once being established finally resulted in the founding of a monastery by the 4th Tongkhor Lama Dogyü Gyatsho¹²⁷ (1621-1683) near today's Huangyuan county seat. Mongol prince Gushri Khan, who made the Gelugpa predominate in central Tibet, offered the land around Sun and Moon Pass and Tongkhor town as a domain to Tongkhor Lama. That community for centuries was an important trading post for all the people on the shores of Lake Kokonor and in Tsongkha.

The lamasery was already destroyed in the aftermath of the revolt of Lobsang Tendzin (1724). When reconstructing Tongkhor Gompa in 1736, the 5th Tongkhor Lama moved it 28 km farther south to Riyue village. As his predecessor had established good relations with the imperial court and was bestowed with the title of Chanshi [dhyana-teacher] Manjushri in 1665, he became one of the first

khutuktus, incarnate lamas, to reside in the Chinese capital of Beijing.

Although Tongkhor Gompa was famous for its Tantric practice (Samvara, Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka) its 200 monks mainly studied in the two colleges of Exoterics and of Kalacakra. In 1958 it possessed a temple dedicated to Shakyamuni and had ten tulku residencies. Most of these were demolished in the 1960s. Now we have one residential building and a main hall with a striking interior decoration. The festival calendar of Tongkhor Gompa is well booked, with religious celebrations virtually every lunar month.

In 1996, 22 monks took care of the monastery. The assembly hall is of Chinese architecture, with prayer-wheels around it, all well painted. Entering the temple, there are gilded statues of the eight mahasattvas along the side walls. The main shrine at the back carries gilded stucco images of Amitayus, Kasyapa Buddha, a Jowo-Shakyamuni of 2 to 2.5 m height, then Maitreya and Baisajyaguru. Besides the main temple we see a structure that most likely was not demolished. Luxuriant wood carvings and older colours of Chinese inspired paintings are still remarkable. The upper floor shelters a shrine with a Jowo in the centre, a Shakyamuni to the left and a Manjushri to the right. Two thangkas depict Amitabha and Green Tara.¹²⁸

Dratshang Gön (*grva tshang dgon dga' ldan chos 'khor gling*), *Zhazang Si* in Chinese, lies near Bayan village some 15 km to the northwest of Huangyuan county town. It is supposed to be located at where, in 641, the leader of the Tuyuhun tribes welcomed Tang princess Wencheng on her way to marry Tibet's King Songtsen Gampo. Mongolian monks maintained a Sakyapa hermitage here¹²⁹ that in 1578 was reconstituted to belong to the Gelugpa when the 3rd Dalai Lama met with Altan Khan. A monastery was built in 1637 under protection of the Khoshot Mongol leader Gushri Khan (whose armour and sword were formerly kept here). Several demolitions during the notorious unrests required reconstruction in 1724, 1875 and 1984. Dratshang Gön was not just a significant religious site, but until 1931 served as the political and commercial centre for all 29 banners (tribes) of Kokonor Mongols. That is why the latter maintained seven princely residencies (*yamen*) within the monastic complex wherein they held their regular assemblies. The gompa distinguished itself with a two-storied Tibetan-style assembly hall, temples for Maitreya and the Buddha trinity of the Three Ages (*trikaya*) plus several tulku residencies. In 1958 one single incarnate lama guided 64 monks and oversaw three colleges. By 1987 a sutra hall and a tulku residence were rebuilt, and 20 monks lived in ordinary Tibetan mud houses.¹³⁰

2.6.7. Subsistence means and social situation of monasteries in Tsongkha

The successful application of Yuan and Ming policies ended up with Lamaism having a firm hold on both Mongols and Tibetans, the Manchu Qing dynasty were induced to continue promoting and protecting Tibetan Buddhism. The year 1723 became the turning point in the history of the Gelugpa's ensuing development in Tsongkha. As most of the famous lamas had supported the Khoshot Mongol princely chieftain Lobsang Tendzin's rebellion against Chinese control, the crushing of that revolt in 1724 entailed the destruction of nearly all the monasteries in Tsongkha. Although most of them were later rebuilt, some of them even nourished by imperial funds, restrictions the Qing emperors imposed now were severe. Not only were many titles and seals which had been bestowed upon by the Ming court recalled, but from now on Qing authorities even restricted the number of monks resident in the monasteries, and people living on their land came under Chinese secular jurisdiction. Under these

circumstances, it is not surprising that some lamaseries deteriorated, and the number of monks decreased considerably.

Lamaseries in Tsongkha were well positioned to exploit in various ways the real estates that emperors of two dynasties had granted them as domains. The lamas collected rents from their tenants, either levied on the agricultural land or herds of the nomads. Some monasteries owned oil and grain mills which could be leased to farmers, and those who owned forests did not hesitate to use them as a further source of revenue if needed. Taxes on merchants who came to visit festivals on the lamaseries' grounds further contributed to their income, as did tolls on bridges, alms-collecting and money-lending. It is obvious why at the beginning of the 20th century, in Tsongkha 'the monasteries are the only imposing buildings in the country. They are the bankers, money lenders, owners of flour mills, and big sellers of grain and cattle'.¹³¹ At the same time, lamaseries absorbed

... a high proportion of the male population by these monasteries¹³² [what] had a serious effect on the productivity of the region... Men who became Lamas were not only withdrawn from production but had to be fed by the depleted population. (...)

At the same time the influence and power of the lamaseries competed destructively with the authority and wealth of the T'u-ssu [Tusi] local lords, whose subjects frequently moved in large numbers to become 'disciples' tilling the land of lamaseries which offered them more favorable terms of tenantry. Such considerations helped to explain why in 1723 the T'u-ssu so willingly helped the Chinese military expedition which crushed the revolt of the Lamas.¹³³

After 1724, when losing much of the former imperial support, the economic situation of common monks changed severely. As the financial support of the monasteries was mostly insufficient, they had to earn a living and thus worked in various fields, a principal one being trade. This contributed to lowering their social prestige as monks, who should have been 'committed to monastic life with passionate devotion', but were rather 'endowed with a roving eye for business' and 'not bent on prayers and meditation' (Schram).¹³⁴ Moreover, frequent disputes between many monasteries, not only adhering to

different orders (like Nyingmapa and Gelugpa), sometimes even led to warlike conflicts.¹³⁵ During such fights monks were sometimes killed (by the monks of the 'enemy' lamasery) and the financial burdens arising from the conflicts and their judicial consequences could weigh extremely heavy. The economic consequence of such circumstances was that

... the wealth that flowed into the granaries and treasures of the monasteries was removed from circulation and did not provide surpluses for trade; it was either consumed, or hoarded, or used to found new Lama communities, and was not even used for charitable grants to the lay population. At the same time, the rest of the community suffered from lack of labor to expand agriculture and production. The economy inevitably shrank until it produced scarcely enough for its own consumption; there was no surplus left to stimulate trade and the growth of cities.

Thus the sociological and economic history of Lamaism in the Monguor region can be

summarized by saying that under political patronage its growth was artificially stimulated, with the result that it expanded so fast that it disrupted both the economic system and the social structure of the country, making improvement and progress impossible.¹³⁶

Looking at these economic circumstances we still have to take into consideration that Tsongkha was and is a multi-ethnic area with a majority of non-Tibetan farmers (Tu, Han-Chinese, Hui Muslims) whose interest in the flourishing of the lamaseries was limited. Thus, after the imperial support was reduced, it is obvious that the number of monks gradually decreased. Therefore Schram's estimate¹³⁷ of 10,000 monks in all of Tsongkha in 1910 seems to be more than sufficient, especially as a census in 1729-1735 noted a total figure of 5,543 monks in 77 lamaseries.¹³⁸ In this light, today's number of more than 2,000 monks and 25 tulku in more than 100 monasteries and temples all over Tsongkha seems to be quite fair. Religious life of the Tibetan community in Amdo is really not about to end.

Historical sources recorded the natural boundaries of Rongwo Valley. Rongwo valley originally began as a small basin with today's Langzang'an Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture including the counties of Tongren, Meili, Zizhou and Lichuan. As there are close relationships to the area on the northern banks of the Ya River, neighbouring parts of Xizang and Hezuo county are included here. Since the time of the Tangut Yuan dynasty and throughout the Ming empire the region was controlled as a political status unit centred in the main valley around Rongwo Monastery, the bigten lamasery in the present day town of Tongren. The latter serves as an ancient capital of Langzang'an Prefecture.

With the people of Rongwo having been 'very fierce and delight in fighting among themselves', it is not surprising that the area was hardly controlled by Chinese authorities even as late as the 17th century. This may also be due to the complexity of the population structure as there is a fascinating ethnic mix of Tibetan farmers and herders comprising one of the largest proportions of local populations in Amdo on the one hand, while the Hui Muslim (Salar and Hui) to the north and tribes of Racheong, Tibetanized Tu and Han in the west and Mongolian tribes to the south.

According to the old name of the monastery Rongwo Chonchen Choklon Ling (rong wo chon chen cho lung khor lo) as far as Amdo is concerned, it was the third-largest lamasery, second-only to Litang and Langzang, in older times. According to historical records, the first temple buildings in Rongwo were built about 1260 during the Mongol Yuan dynasty. Corresponding to the balance of power of the time, it was an establishment of the Sakya school. Originally quite a small institution, the monastery was gradually enlarged. The Ming emperor continued their predecessors' policy of 'linking [the border regions] by using their own' herds' and promoted Lama Sa'mon Khanjen (sa'mon gian zin chen) organized renovations in 1426.

Lama Sa'mon Khanjen's ancestor Lhaje Dzamawa (lha je dzam wa) originated from central Tibet near the foot of sacred Mt. Nyenchen Thangtha. He was a yogi who supposedly had mastery over black magic, but was famous for his medical knowledge and therapeutics. The patriarch of the Sakya order had sent him to Rongwo to organize its administration. For son Rongchen Dordenbum (rong chen mdo

3. Rongwo Monasteries and Rebgong art

The toponym Rongwo actually designates a river, *Longwu He* in Chinese, and its valley lying south of Tsongkha and within the northern bend of the Ma Chu (Yellow River). The river is the last main tributary of the Ma Chu before it leaves the Tibetan Plateau. Its Tibetan name Gu Chu (*dgu chu*) means ‘nine rivers’ and hints at the system of nine tributaries¹ of the Rongwo, three of them each within the upper, middle and lower reaches of the Gu Chu. In Chinese it is further called *Regong Chuan*, derived from Tibetan Rebgong which is a designation for the twelve Tibetan tribes of the area.² As these tribes in historical times exceeded the natural boundaries of Rongwo Valley, Rongwo may roughly be seen as identical with today’s Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture including the counties of Tongren, Jainca, Zekog and Henan.³ As there are close relationships to the area on the northern banks of the Ma Chu, near its confluence with the Gu Chu river, neighbouring parts of Xunhua and Hualong counties are included here. Since the time of the Mongol Yuan dynasty and throughout the Ming empire, the region was controlled as a politico-religious unit centred in the main valley around Rongwo Monastery, the biggest lamasery in the present-day town of Tongren. The latter serves as the district capital of Huangnan Prefecture.

With the people of Rongwo having been ‘very ferocious and delight in fighting among themselves’,⁴ it is not surprising that the area was hardly controlled by Chinese authorities even as late as the 17th and 19th centuries. This may also be due to the complexity of the population structure as there is a fascinating ethnic mix of Tibetan farmers⁵ and herdsmen—constituting one of the largest proportions of Tibetan populations in Amdo on the one hand, while there are Muslims (Salar and Hui) to the north and northeast of Rebgong, Tibetanized Tu and Han in its heart and Mongolian tribes to the south.

3.1. Rongwo Gönchen

The main lamasery of the Rongwo or Rebgong region, Rongwo Gönchen (*rong po dgon chen*, Chinese *Longwu Si*), is located in Longwu town, the heart of Huangnan’s prefectural capital of Tongren. This township is reached by car, 130 km from Xining, via Ping’an and Jianzha, from Lanzhou via Linxia and Xunhua (70 km from the latter), or directly from Xiahe and Labrang monastery (115 km) via Bao’an village on a dirt road through the grassland east of Tongren.

The full religious name of the monastery is Rongwo Gön Dechen Chökhor Ling (*rong bo dgon bde chen chos ’khor gling*).⁶ As far as Amdo is concerned, it was the third-biggest lamasery, second only to Labrang and Kumbum, yet older than these. According to historical records, the first temple buildings in Rongwo were built about 1301 during the Mongol Yuan dynasty. Corresponding to the balance of power of the time, it was an establishment of the Sakya school. Originally quite a small institution, the monastery was gradually enlarged. The Ming emperors continued their predecessors’ policy of ‘ruling [the border regions] by [using their own] habits’ and promoted Lamaism for its influence on the restless Tibetan and Mongolian tribes. Thus in 1370 the monastic complex of Rongwo Gön was extended by imperial decree, and the famous Lama Samten Rinchen (*bsam gtan rin chen*) organized restorations in 1426.

Lama Samten Rinchen’s ancestor Lhaje Dranawa (*lha rje brag sna ba*) originated from central Tibet near the foot of sacred Mt. Nyenchen Thanglha. He was a yogin who supposedly had mastery over black magic, but was famous for his medical knowledge and therapeutics. The patriarch of the Sakya order had sent him to Rongwo to organize its administration. His son Rongchen Dodembum (*rong chen mdo*

sde 'bum), territorial administrator of the valley, was father of nine sons—with Samten Rinchen among them. Tsongkhapa's teacher Chöje Döndrub Rinchen, the founder of Shyachung Gompa, became Samten Rinchen's teacher as well, and as a benefactor of the local *baihu*⁷ he had Rongwo monastery completed by the construction of 18 big and small temple buildings. Religious leadership of Rongwo Gönchen was given to his younger brother Lodrö Sengge (*blo gros seng ge*). The latter's deep-rooted Buddhist wisdom induced the Ming emperor in about 1426-1435 to bestow on him the title of a Great Teacher of the Nation, *da guoshi*.⁸ Hence, the rule of the clerics, as established since the Yuan empire, was formally established as a joint politico-religious administration of the Rongwo region.

Around the turn of the 16th to the 17th century, when the Gelugpa order had become a most influential Buddhist school in central Amdo, Rongwo Gönchen was reconstituted as a Gelugpa lamasery by Shar Kalden Gyatso. This is when the main assembly hall (Tsuglakhang) was completed, and in 1625 an imperial tablet reading: 'Superb Abode of the Western Regions' (*xiyu shengjing*) was hung above its main gate. When the 1st Shargyitsang (*shar gyi tsang*), the reincarnation of Samten Rinchen, named Yeshe Gaden Gyatsho (1607-1677) was abbot of Rongwo Gön, he had the Tshennyi Dratshang (college of Buddhist philosophy) built in 1630.

In 1767 the Qianlong Emperor (1736-1795) of Qing dynasty bestowed another high rank on Gaden Gyatso (posthumously the 1st Shargyitsang): Sublime and Enlightened Teacher of the nation, Rongwo Gönchen Khutukhtu. The 2nd Shargyitsang Ngawang Thrinle Gyatsho (1678-1739) established a Tantric College, Gyüpa Dratshang, wherein Buddhist logics (*Prajñaparamita*) was taught as well. The Kalacakra faculty (Dünkor Dratshang) for the study of astronomy, calendar, oracle, among others, was constructed in 1773, during the time of the 3rd Shargyitsang Gedün Thrinle Rabgye (1740-1794). The latter faculty's grounds grew steadily until the buildings finally covered an area of more than 0.25 hectare. This duly corresponds to the growing influence of Rongwo's lamas in central Amdo. The 7th incarnation of the lamasery's founder, Losang Thrinle Lungdo Gyatsho (1916-1978) even became head of Huangnan prefecture and held some political functions on a national level.

The entire monastic complex of Rongwo Gönchen formerly extended about one kilometre from north to south and nearly as much at its rear across the slope of the mountain. On a surface of more than 25 hectares the lamasery originally comprised some 31 temple buildings, about 40 tulku residencies and more than 300 monks' houses. At its heyday about 2,300 monks lived in Rongwo Gön, and before 1958 there were still more than 1,700 monks and 43 incarnate lamas. Unfortunately, the magnificent and solemn temple halls with their Chinese-style roofs of glazed tiles and superb decorations were mostly destroyed in the late 1950s and during the Cultural Revolution. Just three sutra halls and five residences have survived the demolitions of the 1960s. After reopening the monastery in 1980, several colleges and temple buildings like those dedicated to Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Hayagriva and the reliquary chörten of the founder were reconstructed, mostly financed by donations of the local populace. By 1990 about 300 monks and six tulkus had returned to the monastery.

The main entrance building of the lamasery faces east and is set off with some prayer wheels to the north. Behind the walls a building serving as a Tibetan hospital can be seen. After passing through the gate hall, we may step into the first courtyard which opens to the front side of the main assembly hall. Besides some lesser halls, it is this Tsuglakhang (*gtsug lag khang*) that has survived the destruction best. It marks the centre of the monastic complex of Rongwo Gönchen. The two-storeyed brick building, facing east, has massive walls measuring more than a metre in depth, and its ground area covers more than 1,700 m². In the inside there are 18 pillars of 12 m length and 1.5 m in circumference, and 146 lesser pillars which support the second floor, the upper gallery and the roof. In the middle part of a Tibetan-style flat roof rises a two-layered gabled and hipped roof (Chin. *xieshan wuding*) covered with green glazed tiles. Central image of the inner Tsuglakhang is a Buddha Shakyamuni, while among the other dozen or so statues is a gilded bronze Tsongkhapa of 11 m height, sumptuously adorned with jewels, jade and other precious stones. The base of this monumental statue measures 26 m in circumference. On the walls some interesting murals are to be seen, depicting the Four Guardian Kings, the dress code for monks and two of Amdo's most important local protectors: the mountain deities Amnye Machen

and Amnye Shyachung.⁹ Among the treasures of the monastery, we believe kept in this hall, was a *Collection of the Teachings and Sacred Hymns of the 1st Shargyitsang Gaden Gyatsho* and some other scientific works on astronomy, among others.

Rongwo Gön may also be entered from the south where a Chinese-style pagoda-like gate of considerable size marks the boundary of the monastic area. A mud street leads towards the side walls of the Big Assembly Hall, leaving the courtyard of the Sedgye Dratshang to the left. Its buildings have not been fully destroyed, and most interesting are some paintings on wood on the upper floor. They portray famous lamaseries like Gyantse's Palkhor Chöde, Lhasa's Drepung, Sera and Ganden, and the Potala Palace. Connecting to the south and a little bit uphill, the Khardong Lhakhang contains the reliquary stupa of the 7th Shargyitsang. Near its northwestern corner we have a gönkhang, depicting opulent protector deities such as Yamantaka and Mahakala. None of them is as tall as the monumental Hayagriva image in a separate hall near the Tsuglakhang.

Further up the hill the restored Kalacakra college has some of the typical murals of Rebgong artists, beautifully painted on canvas fixed to the walls. They show the mythical kingdom of Shambhala, respectively of its kings. Some older thangkas, a larger one portraying Tsongkhapa, have also survived the iconoclasm of the Cultural Revolution. Another sight is a clay image of Manjughosa in the Manjushri Temple (Jampeyang Lhakhang), and the Tantric college, Gyüpa Dratshang, standing high above the lamasery and offering a superb view of both the monastery and the valley.

Festive activities throughout the year have found their way back into Rongwo Gönchen's community. Especially at the Tibetan New Year, there are religious celebrations such as unveiling a giant thangka on the 14th day of the first lunar month, a procession of a Maitreya statue on the 15th and mask dances on the 16th.

3.2. Wutun: the area and monasteries

The Chinese term *Wutun* names a group of five villages near today's town of Tongren: *wu* means five, while *tun* originally designated a settlement established for reclaiming farmland either by garrison troops or peasants. The population of today's

villages around the two Wutun monasteries is an ethnically mixed one. Its descent is a controversial matter; Gyurme Dorje¹⁰ stresses that these people originated from western Tibet, while Chinese research traces their ethnic origin to the intermixture of local Tibetans with immigrant settlers from South China during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Although the people of Wutun seem to be thoroughly Tibetan, many have been using Han family names—such as Bao, Li, Hou, Mu—for a long time and speak a Chinese with the pronunciation modified to incorporate many Tibetan expressions. This has also been established in historical records; furthermore, we can be sure that in this part of Amdo many different ethnic groups such as Tibetan, Han, and Mongolian had come into close contact when the imperial lords tried to establish their power. Thus, over the centuries, whoever lived in Rongwo had to merge their customs and religious beliefs with the habits of local Tibetans. We may assume that this ethnic mix was, not surprisingly, an essential precondition for developing an artistic genius with its own distinct features—the Rebgong art which is best seen at the two so-called Wutun monasteries. These are reached by the main road coming from Xining, situated just six kilometres northeast of Tongren's Longwu town centre by the roadside.¹¹

For geographical reasons, the two separate gompas at the upper and lower Wutun villages are called upper and lower monastery, and are about 1.5 km distant from each other. In the monasteries themselves, no historical records regarding their foundation have been discovered so far. According to local tradition, during the Tubo kingdom a Tibetan garrison built the first small temple at the site of the lower Wutun monastery. The old Nyingmapa temple called Magonglangwa was reconstituted as a branch monastery of Rongwo Gönchen and thus became part of the Gelugpa tradition. The Upper Wutun Monastery is supposed to have been constructed in 1385 and reconstituted Gelugpa by a disciple of the first Rongwo Shargyitsang in the 17th century. In their present layout both gompas date from that time, i.e. have a history of about 300 years. The buildings are built in a mixture of Tibetan and Han-Chinese styles, with a flat-roofed assembly hall and a pagoda-like structure with three-layered Chinese roofs covered by glazed tiles.

3.2.1. Senggeshong Yago Gompa

Senggeshong Yago Gompa Palden Chögor Ling (*seng ge gshong ya mgo dgon pa dpal ldan chos 'byor gling*) is the full Tibetan name of the upper monastery (Chin. *Wutun shang Si*). The present halls were reconstructed in 1949, following destruction by a blaze in 1946. In 1958 there was a sutra hall, a gönkhang and a Maitreya Temple, all taken care of by more than 200 monks. By 1990 some 100 Gelugpa monks and one tulku had returned. Twenty-two of the monks are among the best painters of the famous Rebgong art, with Shawu Tshering the most outstanding of them.

One of the two main buildings serves as assembly hall (dukhang) containing clay statues of the 7th Rongwo Shargyitsang and founder of Yago Gön. This hall, now restored, is particularly interesting for the study of the decorative patterns of Rebgong art. Almost every part of the structure, from dadoes, lintels to crossbeams and column heads, are elaborately painted or engraved with skillful patterns such as interlaced flowers, curling grass, clouds and water ripples, interspersed with lively birds and such animals as deer, cranes, dragons and phoenixes. To the left of the dukhang is a Shakyamuni temple (Jokhang), the door decorations and Rebgong murals of which are exquisitely worked out. Inside the building we can find a large and fine image of Jowo Shakyamuni.¹² The statue is some ten metres tall, standing in the heart of the two-storeyed Jokhang. Its main features are done in Tibetan architectural style, with the walls painted in yellow, while the central part carries a Chinese-style roof.

3.2.2. Senggeshong Mago Gompa

The Tibetan monastic appellation of Lower Wutun Monastery (Chin. *Wutun Xia Si*) is Senggeshong Mago Gompa Geden Phüntshog Chöling (*seng ge gshong ma mgo dgon pa dge ldan phun tshogs chos gling*). It is supposed to have developed from a Tubo dynasty Nyingmapa temple that was enlarged by the first tulku of Rongwo Gönchen and later turned into a Gelugpa lamasery. After three more embellishments and extensions, in 1958 it consisted of a dukhang, a Maitreya Temple, a gönkhang, and five tulku residencies. With an area of more than five hectares it must have been much larger than today's site which is inhabited by 170 monks (1990), with 20 Rebgong artists among them.

The main structures of Mago Gompa are the assembly hall (dukhang) and a Maitreya Temple (Jampe Lhakhang). Though the Tibetan-style dukhang was used as a wheat granary during the Cultural Revolution, it still has original ceiling panels dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. The luxuriously ornamented doors are framed by fine wood carvings and the walls are covered with elaborately painted murals (on canvas, as usual in Amdo): the ubiquitous Wheel of Life and Death, Four Heavenly Kings and a mountain deity besides the entrance, and a number of Tantric protector deities on the inner front side of the sutra hall. Murals inside the assembly hall depict the life story of Shakyamuni, and other Buddha images. The panels outside the entrance, beneath the paintings, again show the exquisite decorations as described above at Yago Gön.

The structure to the right of the assembly hall is the Jampe Lhakhang. It combines features of Tibetan and Chinese architecture, the latter mainly showing in its three-layered roof, thus producing the impression of a shortened Chinese pagoda. It contains an enormous clay image of Maitreya, flanked by beautiful statues of Manjushri, Mahakarunika (eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara), and Tsongkhapa.

On the western bank of Longwu River (Gu Chu), almost opposite the two Wutun monasteries, are two more Gelugpa lamaseries belonging to the Wutun villages complex in mid-Rongwo: Nyenthog and Gomar Gompa in the villages called Thretse¹³ (*khre tse*) which are renowned for being home to Rebgong artists.

3.2.3. Nyenthog Monastery

Nyenthog Gar Tashi Dargye Ling (*gnyan thog sgar bkra shis dar rgyas gling*), or Nianduhu Si in Chinese, lies about 2 km north of Longwu Zhen. The over 300 years old Nyenthog Gompa with 210 monks and five incarnate lamas in 1954, belonged to the medium-sized monasteries of Rongwo. Of the original complex—comprising five residence buildings, three temples and the assembly hall—the dukhang, one residence and the Jampe Lhakhang have survived the Cultural Revolution, as they were used as storehouses. Thus even some older murals (Buddha's life story, Milarepa), aged 80 to 100 years, decorate the Jampe Lhakhang, which shelters a 13-m-high gilded clay image of Maitreya. There are also beautiful new paintings of good Rebgong quality

such as the four Lokapalas, Usnisasitatapatra and Shambhala. Today the 30 monks still possess a thangka-wall for unveiling the huge thangkas at festivals. The layout of Nyenthog Gompa slightly differs from the one of the two Wutun monasteries as the pagoda-like Chinese-style temple housing the Maitreya does not stand at the side of the dukhang, but is placed to the right-hand side of its courtyard, both structures thus framing the open space which they are facing.

3.2.4. Gomar Monastery

Gomar Gar Garden Phüntshog Ling (*sgo dmar sgar dga' ldan phun tshogs gling*), Chin. *Guomari Si*, is situated 4 km north of Nyenthog Gompa. This lamasery, having 120 monks (305 before 1958), repeats the latter's layout with the dukhang, Jampe Lhakhang (the clay Maitreya statue is slightly taller than in Nyenthog) and other buildings surrounding the courtyard. However, the plan of Gomar Gompa is more complete than Nyenthog's; even a gate still exists within the small wall that surrounds the monastery. Furthermore, a big chörten, framed by several smaller ones, was built in 1990.

By looking at four examples of monastic buildings in the Wutun villages near Tongren, we can distinguish the typical features of medium-sized Rebgong lamaseries, a plan that is often followed when building such gompas in other parts of central Amdo. They are mostly a combination of a Tibetan-style assembly hall (dukhang) accompanied by at least one temple hall of which the three-layered, tiled, swaying roofs stress the influence of Chinese architecture. The roof decorations are absolutely Tibetan on the dukhang, while the pagoda-like temple-roofs mostly carry Chinese patterns. The main image within those temples is always a large image (± 10 m high) of either Jowo Shakyamuni, Tsongkhapa or Maitreya.

3.3. History and features of Rebgong art

Having its origin in Tongren or the Wutun monasteries, Rebgong art is sometimes also called Tongren or Wutun Art, respectively. As has been said above, Rebgong is the name of a Tibetan tribal association that gave its name to the region of the fertile Rongwo valleys¹⁴ and adjacent grasslands, inhabited by their members.

According to preliminary investigations,¹⁵ Rebgong art—as an important and influential school

of Tibetan fine arts—emerged in the 14th century when both the Sakyapa and Nyingmapa orders of Tibetan Buddhism were represented in Amdo. About that time Rongwo developed as an administrative, cultural and trade centre where the growing influence from central Tibet, through the Sakyapa, transmitted artistic impulses. The region soon became an area of increasing contacts between different ethnic groups and thus of a greater cultural exchange. With the beginning of the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644) a number of Chinese settlers, supposedly from South China,¹⁶ migrated into the lower valleys of central Amdo and gradually mixed with local Tibetan (and Mongolian?) farmers. Their life among a totally different cultural neighbourhood led to the merging of habits, of customs and techniques, and the artistry of the area surely underwent a certain influence by the immigrants, which was somehow integrated into the creative work of Rongwo's inhabitants.

From generation to generation artistic techniques were not simply handed down, but further refined, transposed and, with the expansion of the artists' community, gradually reached maturity. When the Gelugpa school made its way through central Tibet and Amdo after the mid-17th century, a large number of new temples and monasteries were built in Rongwo, with its rich resources in manpower and agriculture. In the surroundings of today's Tongren alone there were more than ten large lamaseries,¹⁷ five of them in the Wutun villages, which provided a fresh impetus to the further development of Rebgong art. By the 18th century, the country must have been dotted with monasteries, and the Rebgong school of art 'became so thriving as to turn Wutun into an art town where everybody was an artist and every household engaged in art'.¹⁸ Thus it spread all over Amdo, crossing the borders into neighbouring regions.

In Wutun villages every family had at least one, some of them even several, male members living as a monk in one of the lamaseries. Especially the two Wutun monasteries, Senggeshong Yago and Mago Gompa, became centres for the training of local Tibetans in fine arts. From childhood novices not only had to study the Buddhist scriptures but were educated to develop their painting, woodcarving and moulding skills as well. The families of the monastic artists also engaged in artistic works. Before 1958 more than 90 per cent of the male population in and

around Wutun were said to have painting and sculpture skills.¹⁹

The most famous artists of Rebgong travelled far and wide as the products of their skills were sought after wherever large numbers of Buddhist devotees were found. It cannot be considered as true—as is said generally—that art in Tibet was always a product of anonymous artists. As Giuseppe Tucci has shown of artistic works in the Gyantse area of central Tibet,²⁰ there were painters and sculptors who signed the works they had created. Today, not knowing the names of most of the painters or sculptors may have many reasons, but certainly is not due to the circumstance that artists working only as anonymous devotees. That works of art in Amdo monasteries do not bear signatures or epigraphs with the names of the painter or sculptor should not be taken as a sign of their anonymity. The Tibetan artist had a special status, being renowned, loved and respected in his society and among his fellow-men, notes Heather Stoddard.²¹ If he was good, he was assigned to many works and accepted pupils; he was thus well known to his patron. Rebgong artists also were not anonymous—for even today there are four artists in Rongwo who have become celebrities in their own right: Shawu Tshering of upper and Gyatsho of lower Wutun, Künsang and Jigme.²²

Rebgong artists, therefore, have travelled across the entire Tibetan Highland, to Mongolia and even to the northernmost parts of today's India.²³ They came in contact with Buddhists of all schools, and also painting and sculpture in central Tibet, Tibetan woodcarving in Kham (Kandse area) and even murals of mediaeval Tibet in the Dunhuang grottoes on the Silk Road. Elements of the art and craftsmanship they came in contact with influenced Rebgong art and were gradually integrated. The unique style of the Rebgong school of art was established by critically assimilating these outside impulses into the local Tibetan painting style, adapting Kandse woodcarving to its own need, and combining with elements of Chinese architecture and the workmanship of Hui Muslim stone-masons. Features of Tibetan art and folklore thus were linked with some of the features of Chinese craftsmanship and those of other neighbouring regions. Whilst earlier the Buddhist art of India and Tibet had provided the stimulant to Rebgong, the latter's artistic flourishing subsequently began to give back an impetus to those far-away places and to influence the art of Central, East and even South-

east Asia. According to Ye²⁴ the most famous artists were even invited to Nepal, India and Burma.

Rebgong art should not be considered merely as a school of painting,²⁵ though painting is one of the central skills, the distinct features of which are most obvious in the artistry in Rongwo. Rebgong art also comprises sculpturing, which is highly representative of Amdo, wood-carving and a specific architectural ornamentation with distinct patterns, and even silk figures on cloth base (appliquéd works)—thus presenting it as a fully comprehensive art school. It is correct, though, to note that Rebgong artists mainly concentrate on murals and scroll paintings (thangkas), and create wooden Buddha images only on a small scale.

It is most important to say, as far as murals are concerned, that these generally were not, and are not, paintings applied onto the walls' surface like frescoes, or in Tibet would be *al secco* paintings. The overwhelmingly largest part of Rongwo—and even Amdo—monastery murals are first drawn and painted on canvases which are tightened in between wooden frames only after completion. The frames placed between the roof-bearing pillars in the Chinese-style buildings to hold the paintings in place, almost constitute a wooden wall. More often the completed frames are joined together and put up in front of the temple buildings' mud or stone walls. Thus they follow the principle of thangkas rather than of murals, and may be seen as large-sized versions of thangkas. As a Rebgong painting is done on canvas and often even at the painter's home, on principle there is the option of creating either a thangka or a mural right up to its completion.

The Rebgong artists' painting techniques bear a likeness to a traditional realistic Chinese painting style called *Gongbi zhongcai hua*, characterized by a fine brushwork and putting a greater stress on exact delineation and enriched colours. By paying close attention to details, fine and delicate strokes are drawn while rich and varied colours are 'applied evenly in their own respective places with little attention to light and shade'.²⁶ Yet an art of sunshine and bright daylight is not a feature of Rebgong art alone but typical for what Tucci calls Eastern painting.²⁷ However, he has shown, as an early Chinese influence in Tibetan painting, the improvement and perfection of the combination of detailed patterns and at the same time, leaving blanks, thinning out figures and thus revealing

... to the Tibetans the mysterious poetry of space: in certain schools ... the figures emerge from a vast landscape, on which green mountains, shaded by pine-trees stand out, rivers slowly flow, birds and gazelles are basking. (...) Hairs and beards are drawn one by one, instead of being represented, as in the old paintings, by indistinct masses of blue and black. (...) Then clothes were covered with arabesques in their minutest items, lined with gold and patterns, reproduced in their natural vividness of colours and embroideries.²⁸

It is this preference for arabesques, for the minutely executed pattern, that seems to have further developed within Rebgong painting. The local Rongwo style thus is characterized by the dominance of lines and patterns, even within smaller coloured spaces and realized either within the same colour or by fine silvery or golden lines. Surrounded by rings of clouds, by tiny animals, flowers or landscape motives, the portrayed deities mostly create quite a vivid impression. So when Tucci elaborated the lure and fascination of Tibetan works of art, he ended still feeling that

the figures do not lose their hieratic fixity, unmoved by the least throb of life. They are lifeless and limp projections of a world of remote ideas, they do not come down to comfort those who pray before them.²⁹

This is no longer true for masterpieces of Rebgong paintings, which seem to be able to capture the observer and transport him away to the scene depicted on the murals. The formerly predominant immobility may not be fully freed up, but at least the portrayed scenery is further enriched by many aspects of movement and change. It is a life momentum and thus has lost some of its meditative character. The motivation for this kind of realization of painting may lie in the more extroverted target—which seemingly intends fully to address the observer, to touch his heart and fancy rather than to stress the more introverted, meditative character of the act of creating the image itself.

Subjects of Rebgong painting are, of course, Buddhist themes, either instructive topics such as the wheel of life and death, regulations for the monks' daily life, or different deities, Jatakas, the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni, and the Shambhala myth. According to the different status and rank of deities,

they are ascribed different characters and postures: friendly or wrathful aspects, in sitting, standing or even dancing poses, modest or ornate in adornment. In this it totally follows the style of traditional Buddhist painting as it was handed down from central Tibet, yet the figures have an even more vivacious and lifelike effect. Animals strewn across the paintings' surface are tenderly portrayed, such as duck, deer, horse, lion or elephant. They are depicted in lively poses and produce a natural atmosphere which is further enhanced by gentle waves of rivers and ponds and snow-covered peaks towering in the distance. The main images are often harmoniously integrated into a naturalistic setting. Its idyllic beauty is somehow 'idealized or made fantastic in order to harmonize more closely with the conception of the deity in the transcendent realm',³⁰ and renders it possible to the observer to become an intimate part of the portrayed perfected universe: a Pure Land of the Buddhist vision.

As Rebgong art still flourished in the 1950s it managed to survive to be handed down on to the present, despite all the losses during the Cultural Revolution. Paintings of that late period are characterized by being partial to decorative purposes as described above. The preference of the painters goes towards florid styles, fine outlines, gay colours and a unique ingenuity in the use of golden and silvery colours. Yet an excessive pursuit of elaboration and decorative effects sometimes leads to trivial and stereotyped productions, although this deficiency in modelling may well be compensated for by the high-level suitability for decorative purposes.³¹

Sculpture in Rebgong art is represented in varied forms. It includes of course moulding clay images, which is one of the main ways of Rebgong artists' expression, and further includes wood-, brick- and stone-carving as well as butter sculptures. Most prominent are clay sculptures, as can be seen readily from the frequent occurrence of giant Buddhas or, more often, Maitreya and Tsongkhapa images in separate temples especially reserved for them. Rebgong moulding may be divided into mono- and polychromatic figures; main images tend to be gilded. Similar to painting, Rebgong sculpture was at its climax from the mid-17th to the early 19th centuries, with lively shapes, yet soft and gracious contouring of the benign deities of that period. The mouldings are further distinguished by flowing foldings of bewilderingly rich and textured garments

and decorative objects, and vivacious postures, vigorous and even violent with wrathful manifestations. Aureoles and pedestals carry ornate and delicate designs. Unfortunately, examples of that earlier period, like the Buddha sculptures of the Upper Wutun monastery's assembly hall, were mostly destroyed during the revolutionary upheavals of the late 1960s.

Wood-carving in Rongwo mainly developed the decorative arrangements of column heads and wooden frames of the temple entrance. Buddha images made of wood are only found in small numbers, like the gilded standing Maitreya of 70 cm height in Wutun monastery.³² Brick carvings also with fully decorative features, are quite impressive. These are sometimes elaborated on temple structures, such as trimmings on roof ridges, gables, and animal or dragon heads on the edges of upturned eaves. As many sacred halls in Amdo's lamaseries are built of bricks, we can often find bas-reliefs on their front side. Mostly these depict floral patterns, trees or animals, sometimes a dragon, tiger or snow lion; while the gate-like frame to the vestibule in front of the inner entrance sometimes shows religious motifs—such as the flaming sword of wisdom or the 'Four Harmonious Friends'.³³ Generally, ornate brick carving is to be seen much less than wood-carving, and in ethnically mixed areas rather than in far-off Tibetan monasteries. We may assume that this architectural feature of lamaseries—such as in Rongwo, Tsongkha and Labrang area—was introduced through Hui Muslim influence. This influence should not be attributed simply to the fact that often Muslim craftsmen were employed by monasteries to construct temple buildings and fit them out. A proximity factor is important as well, namely that Tibetans living near Muslim communities are well acquainted with this feature of Muslim architecture, and the persons in charge therefore regularly ordered the creation of such brick-carvings. Most famous is the craftsmanship of Hui Muslims of the Linxia area in Gansu, a district that has the highest density of Muslim population in China, and that by some Tibetans is seen as a part of Tibet.³⁴

As far as Rebgong sculpture is concerned, we should mention butter figures which are moulded on the occasion of the New Year's Festival. Similar to those in Kumbum and Labrang monasteries, they are found in Rongwo too, yet on a smaller scale.

Compared to the more spiritual influence once having come from India to Tibet, Rebgong art has, in a way, accentuated some rather mundane themes. The explicit emphasis on decorative works, often of non-religious origin—such as plants and animals—may have developed the unique Tibeto-Chinese Amdo style of Buddhist images; but it has also introduced more realistic references to people's everyday life in the paintings of Rongwo. Of course this was not unknown in murals in central and western Tibet either, later being superceded during more formal periods of its sacred art. In Rebgong art, genre-painting has found its way back on canvas. In a shabby side-room of Lower Wutun Monastery a mural portrays pastoral scenes with cattle and sheep. A woman who is carrying water on her back is depicted, as are nobles in a lofty mansion where beautiful girls are attending them.³⁵

In the first half of the 20th century Chinese artists became conscious of the importance of Rebgong art. China's famous painter Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) visited Rongwo and Wutun village in the 1940s. He studied the local painting tradition and invited the best among Rebgong artists to accompany him to Dunhuang, where they in their turn could study murals of the famous Buddhist Mogao grottoes. This initiated the first efforts for research on Rebgong art, thus giving what at the time was a last impetus to this art in the 1950s. Artistic work came to an abrupt halt with the start of political troubles in 1958, and even more so during the Cultural Revolution.

To save what has survived and to promote further research, the Rebgong Tibetan Art Research Group³⁶ was set up in Longwu town of Tongren in 1979. It called together some 30 personalities of major significance for this art, and initiated systematic study and research. Artists resumed the training of pupils, but by the mid-20th century most of Rebgong's greatest artists were already deceased—with the exception of the previously mentioned painters Shawu Tshering, Gyatso, Jigme³⁷ and Künsang. It is due to the dedication of these elderly masters that the tradition has been carefully handed down meanwhile to a new generation. The masters and their pupils have created within one or two decades most of the artistic fixtures in the majority of Amdo monasteries that were rebuilt since 1980.

3.4. Monasteries of the Yellow River bend

A reliable regional division of Rongwo district is difficult because the actual Rongwo valley encloses a much smaller area than its tangible zone of

influence. The latter may be roughly outlined by the northern part of a zone that is framed by the bend of the Ma Chu before it leaves, as Yellow River, today's province of Qinghai. Further to the south, Mongol and Tibetan tribes of the grasslands rather tend to feel affiliated with the holy mountain of the Ngolok and consequently to monasteries there. Hence we conclude our synopsis of the Rongwo area with a closer look at some of the most important monasteries of the contemporary counties of Hualong (Tib. Bayan Khar, *ba yan mkhar*), Xunhua (Dowi, *rdo sbis*), Jainca (Centsha, *gcan tsha*) and Guide (Thrikha region). All the fertile valleys of those highly populated counties are centres of either Muslim communities such as the Hui of Hualong and the Salar of Xunhua, both belonging to the administrative district Haidong ('Eastern Qinghai', Tib. Tshoshar), or the predominantly Han-Chinese inhabitants of Guide town. Tibetans and a small number of Mongolians are generally found in the higher valleys and in the grasslands of the upper plateaus. Thus, important Tibetan monasteries generally are not to be seen near the county seats or within town, but rather on remote mountains and in secluded valleys.

3.4.1. Dentig Monastery

The small yet important Dentig monastery—historically one of the most important in the whole of Amdo—is located in a deep and secluded valley of Xiaojishi Mountain in the eastern part of Hualong county.³⁸ From the county seat's Bayan town a motorable road leads to Jinyuan (45 km) and further south to the village of Köpa, from where an hour's hike over the mountain leads one to the monastery. A closer access than from Hualong is from Xunhua county town, though still time-consuming. After crossing the Yellow River in Xunhua town, it is a day's walking distance (8 hours) to Dentig Gompa (Chin. *Dandou Si*).

Mount Dentig for long has been one of Amdo's foremost power-places associated with the Buddha-mind and, according to a local tradition, there existed a meditation hall of Guru Padmasambhava.³⁹ Nevertheless, the history of Dentig Gompa (*dan tig shel gyi yang dgon*) is closely related to the second propagation of the Buddhist Doctrine. The three Tibetan hermits Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung had fled from central Tibet when King Langdarma persecuted Buddhists and suppressed Buddhism. They finally reached the area of Tsongkha

in northeastern Tibet and took refuge in caves of Mount Dentig and Martsang Drag.⁴⁰ When practising the way of the Dharma, they accepted a disciple called Möpa or Musug Salre⁴¹ who later, as an ordained monk with the name of Gongpa Rabsal, became one of the most important figures for the revival of Buddhism in Tibet. His becoming a monk is supposed to have resulted in the founding of the monastery of Dentig in 940.

One legend told by local folks has it that the first hermitage here was established by Pälgyi Dorje (*dPal gyi rdo rje*), the murderer of King Langdarma. After having shot the fatal arrow, he is also said to have fled to Amdo and taken refuge in an isolated gorge of Dentig mountain. With the streaming waters of the Yellow River to the south and surrounded by dense forests, it was the ideal place to hide, and Pälgyi Dorje therefore decided to settle down (*dan tig* in Tibetan).⁴² Hence came the name of the hermitage.

According to Schram, Gongpa Rabsal was a native of Jyazur village just north of today's Xunhua where he built a hermitage in 940. He

went to Kan-chou⁴³ ... for study but could not enter Tibet on account of the famine. In a vision he saw 'Asuras' known as the 'Nine Brother Dwarfs' residing in the neighbourhood of Mount Dantig, who invited him to go to their place where there are great hermitages 'promising to become his lay supporters.'

In order to combat certain Yogis existing there, he laid the foundation of the monastery of Dantig, disciples joined him; he resided there for 35 years and died at 84 (975). Other celebrated fugitives of Tibet, called 'The Six Men from *dbUs* and *gTsang*', who inaugurated the revival of Buddhism in Tibet, had met with dGe-ba rab-sgal [sic!], and had their ordination ceremony presided over by his disciple.⁴⁴

Sherab presumes that the monastery was established in about 971 when Gongpo Rabsal became a fully ordained monk. Here some years later he ordained Lume and ten men from Ü-Tsang into full monkhood. As they later returned to central Tibet and thus initiated Buddhist revival in the cultural core of Tibet proper, both Dentig and Gongpo Rabsal are—like the Indian guru Atisha and the wise

Rinchen Sangpo of the western Tibetan Guge kingdom—of primary importance for the second propagation of Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore we shall take a closer look at the life of Lachen Gongpo Rabsal:

He was born in 952 in Jiaru ... not far from Dan-tig monastery on the northern bend of the Yellow River. It is said that the village was inhabited by the descendants of the soldiers sent to station at Mdo-khams borderlands in the reigns from Srong-tsan sgam-po to Ral-pa-can. In 970, Gtsans-rab-gsal, G.yo-dge-vbyung, and Dmar-shakya-muni, as Mkhan-po, Slob-dpon and Chos-mdzad respectively, shaved Bla-chen's hair, held rituals for him to take vows of a monk and gave him a religious name, Dge-bavi-sras. Due to his profound learning, he was later called Dgongs-pa-rab-gsal. The next year, he asked to take the Dge-long vows, but failed, because to take the vows he would have needed five tutors, while the number of his tutors was not enough then. He went to ask the help of Dpal-gyi-rdo-rje [Pälgyi Dorje] who lived then in a cave of Dung-ri mountain. Dpal-gyi-rdo-rje said that he could not act as a tutor for such a ritual because he had killed Dar-ma, the tyrant, and he promised to introduce two tutors to Dpal-gyi-rdo-rje. So, two Han monks, Guo Wang and Ji Peng, were introduced to the original three, and the five tutors held the rituals of Dge-long vows for Bla-chen. (...)

After becoming a monk, Bla-chen made use of Dan-tig monastery as the centre to preach Buddhist teachings, accepted disciples and began to build holy halls and temples. ... Under his active guidance Dan-tig monastery became a well known Buddhist centre in Amdo and enjoyed a high reputation. ... Before the rise of monasteries Sku-vbum and Sgo-lung,⁴⁵ Dan-tig monastery had already become well known in Qinghai. In the Ming dynasty, the Tibetan officials ... all paid religious respects to the monastery and sometimes even settled down for a period of time.⁴⁶

Sherab further describes the role of Lachen Gongpa Rabsal and his disciples in again spreading the Buddhist Doctrine in central Tibet:

After the assassination of Dar-ma ... [and] the fall of the Tubo dynasty, ... Buddhism had

been wiped out, and the Dbus and Gtsang regions were in a state of chaos. ... Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan ... who lived not far from Bsam-yas Monastery in the Lho-kha region, sent a group on a pilgrimage for Buddhist scriptures to Dan-tig monastery in Mdo-smad. The group consisted of ten persons; five from Dbus and five from Gtsang... The Three Worthies... recommended Bla-chen as an abbot to hold rituals for the ten men. Bla-chen said: 'I cannot act as an abbot, for it is only five years after I have taken the Dgelong vows.' The abbot Gtsang-rab-gsal said that five years were enough according to the Buddhist scripture *vdul-ba-rtsa-ba* [*vinaya-mula-sutra*], especially under the unusual conditions when Buddhism suffered a severe decline. Thus, Bla-chen as Mkhan-po and other tutors as Slob-dpon held rituals for the ten men to take the Dge-slong vows. ... After studying all the Buddhist scriptures ... brought from Tubo by the Three Worthies, the ten men returned to Dbus-Gtsang [Ü-Tsang] at about 977. The doctrines about Buddhist laws they learnt were called in the religious literature in Tibetan Snyabyung Vdul-ba, to be distinguished from Stod-rgyud Vdul of Mnga'-ris region.⁴⁷

The ten-man group came back from Dan-tig monastery to Dbus and Gtsang, preaching the Buddhist doctrines all along their way. ... With financial support of Mngav-bdag khri-pa [the abbot of Samye] and other manorial lords, Klu-mes [Lu-me] and other people built temples and monasteries in the Kham, Dbus and Gtsang regions, accepted disciples and preached Buddhist doctrines. As a result, Tibetan Buddhism was revived⁴⁸ and its scale was even bigger than that before Dar-ma's reign.⁴⁹

In old age, Lachen and his tutors—the Three Worthies—retreated to the cliff of Martsang Drag⁵⁰ where they are supposed to have died. It is for these details that Dentig monastery is viewed as the birthplace of the revival of Tibetan Buddhism—at least in Amdo where people have a perspective of Tibetan history different from the one of the inhabitants of Ü-Tsang. And it is interesting that in Western popular literature this revival generally is seen to have come exclusively from western Tibet,⁵¹ rather than from the northeast although in Tibetan sources it is

clearly noted that the first newly established monasteries in central Tibet were founded by pupils of monks ordained in Amdo.⁵² One may note that the Buddhist revival in Ü-Tsang was initiated from north-eastern and eastern Tibet, while in reforming monastic Tibetan Buddhism the spiritual impetus of western Tibet and Atisha may have played the fundamental role.

Although being located in secluded areas difficult to reach did not prevent most monasteries from being destroyed, Shenrab considers the survival of Dentig Gompa as a consequence of the inaccessibility produced by the surrounding rugged mountains. Its well-preserved temple-buildings combine architectural features of Tibetan and Han-Chinese structures, fitted into a bizarrely shaped nature of grotesque cliffs and densely wooded slopes. The monastic complex consists of a main assembly hall (dukhang) built in thoroughly Tibetan style, several temple buildings and meditation halls, tulku residences and some chörten.

The dukhang's situation at the bottom of the cliffs indicates its ritual importance in the heart of the monastic community. Locals see this solid one-storeyed structure as located between the horns of Yama, King of Death, symbolized by two of the surrounding cliffs. Not uncommonly, murals of its inner walls depict the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni. The hassocks lining the dukhang's ground may accommodate some one hundred monks—i.e as many as were numbered in the *Political and Religious History of Amdo* by Lama Dragönpa Könchog Tenpa Rabgye (b.1801, dec. after 1865).⁵³ In 1958 and on the eve of the Cultural Revolution there were just 18 monks living here, yet the reopening of this holy pilgrimage site brought about 70 monks back to religious service in the assembly hall. A big kitchen lies to its right, while on the left side the living quarters of incarnate lamas are to be found. The Yerdung Chörten stands in front of the dukhang.

Clinging to the cliffs of the upper part of the gorge is the two-storeyed temple for the local Lü or Dragon King⁵⁴ (Amnye Lügyal, *a myes klu rgyal*). The decorations of pillars and cross-beams show vivid images of flying dragons and phoenixes. Although the hall is dedicated to the Dragon King, the main object of worship is a statue of Shakyamuni, with images of Amitayus and Vajrapani by his side. The main section of the temple is dominated by statues

of the 'three saviours of the world with a kind look',⁵⁵ while the Dragon King's small shrine is located behind them. This structure which is no taller than a person is only open for public worship on the 11th day of the fourth lunar month.⁵⁶

The construction of Rabdragpa Hall is related to the story of an exiled prince of the country of Yawa (*ya ba*) as told in the above-mentioned *Political and Religious History of Amdo*:

In ancient time there was a g.yer-po kingdom. The king had no son, so he prayed to the gods. Ten months later the queen gave birth to a son. Grown up, the prince always gave alms. Once he even gave the enemy kingdom a strong white elephant, a pet of the king. The king was so angry that he exiled the prince to Dan-tig mountain (Dan-tig monastery) for twelve years. As a result, a monastery was built there.⁵⁷

The spot where the exiled prince Drime Künden (*dri med kun ldan*) and his family lived is where Ragdrapa Hall was built, a solid and simple structure wherein murals depict the story of the prince and his family. A statue of Cakrasamvara (Demchog) is the main image, and a reliquary stupa of 1985 commemorates Tsheten Shabdrung (*tshe bstan zhabs drung*), one of the most renowned Tibetologists of the PRC.⁵⁸

Another uniquely styled hall, the Ajita Temple, is built against the cliff and situated on a difficult mountain path. It was constructed in honour of a bhiksu who is said to have meditated here for one century. Inside the bell-tower-like hall are statues of the Buddhas of the Three Times, the goddess Sarasvati, of Milarepa and of the ascetic Ajita.

At the cliff to the right side of the dukhang stands the mediation hall of the 3rd Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatsho. In 1583 he had stayed in Amdo before going to Inner Mongolia to perform prayer ceremonies for the deceased Mongol prince Altan Khan. At that time Sönam Gyatsho stayed in Dentig, lived and meditated in a cave in front of which a temple structure was later built. By crossing the hall we enter the Dalai Lama's grotto, where statues of Shakyamuni, Vajrapani, Amitayus, Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara, the Green and White Tara and the 3rd Dalai Lama are to be seen. On the top of the cave there are several small holes said to have been made by Sönam Gyatsho's fingers when trying the firmness of the rocks.

The place where the Three Worthies—Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung—took refuge is marked by another hall, towering on an isolated cliff in the middle of the valley. King Langdarma's murderer, Pälgyi Dorje, is also supposed to have spent the last years of his life here. The ten men of Ü-Tsang who were to bring the Buddhist Doctrine back to central Tibet were ordained as monks by Gongpa Rabsal at this place. Passing through the building, one enters a big and dark cave full of multicoloured stalactites. In a shrine images of the Three Worthies and a painting of Tsongkhapa can be seen. This reminds us that, in its early days, Dentig Monastery would have belonged to the Nyingmapa tradition, as did the three hermits. After Sönam Gyatsho's stay here and the ascendancy of the Gelugpas (16th century), the gompa was also reconstituted as a Yellow Hat institution. The monastery accordingly was affiliated with Minhe county's Tsheten Gön as mother lamasery. Therefore many of Tsheten's tulku came to meditate in Dentig and to decide about its affairs.

Having become a Gelugpa monastery, the Mönlam prayer festival was introduced, which is held in the first lunar month. Throughout the year there are several sutra study meetings, ceremonies and rituals. Like in many other lamaseries, the tradition has been taken up again since a certain liberalization in religious matters was introduced in Chinese politics. For visitors (especially female) it might be important to know that during the summer sutra study meeting, lasting for 45 days (15th day of the sixth lunar month to the 1st of the eighth month), women are not allowed to enter the monastic complex, let alone temple structures.

3.4.2. Xunhua County (Dowi)

Although lying in the heart of what Tibetans call Amdo, at just 1820 m above sea-level, Xunhua is a Muslim dominated area.⁵⁹ Hence the county town's Tibetan name, Dowi Khar (*rDo sbis khar*), is not widely used in Qinghai, but better known as Xunhua county. Its administrative seat is Jishi town on the banks of the Yellow River, just where it is about to leave Qinghai province, through some fantastically shaped gorges. The Muslim Salar people, making up 60 to 65% of the county's whole population, are mainly distributed in the lower valleys—as are the Hui and Han-Chinese—such as the main Yellow River gorge and some wider side-valleys. Thus the

entire province's second biggest mosque is found here.

Tibetans, though, constitute about a quarter of the county's population. They live in the higher-up parts and on the mountain slopes where there are a considerable number of Buddhist monasteries; Gori Dratshang and Bimdo Gönchen are presently the most important. According to the annals of Bimdo Gönchen, local Tibetans, as those of Tongren, are said to have mixed with descendants of Sakya's Könchog family, as well as with indigenous Mongolians (Tu-Monguor). That is why the Xunhua region originally was regarded as lower Rongwo or lower Rebgong, and belonged to the Sakyapa order's influential zone. Later on, when the Gelugpa school expanded, their first monasteries were established here. But it was only after Labrang Lamasery was founded and its main abbot, the 2nd Jamyang Rimpoche (1728-1791), expanded his monastery's sphere of influence, that Xunhua and the surrounding area came under the Yellow Hats. In 1957, out of 1245 monks in 26 gompas, there were just some 170 Nyingmapa, with the rest belonging to the Gelugpa sect that had taken over all the former Sakyapa institutions.⁶⁰

Gori Dratshang (*sgo ris grwa tshang dga' ldan 'phel rgyas gling*, Chinese *Gulei Si*)⁶¹ is situated about 30 km to the southeast of Xunhua county town, in the village of Dowi (Daowei). It is one example of a monastery that originally belonged to the Sakyapa and later was reconstituted Gelugpa. Local tradition has it, that Gori monastery was founded in the 13th century by Sakyapa Lama Samten Rinchen, the founder of Rongwo Gönchen. With the latter being turned into a Gelugpa lamasery, Gori had to follow that example. Around 1585 it was renamed Geden Phelgye Ling (*dge ldan 'phel rgyas gling*), 'Prosperous Monastery of the School of the Virtuous', by Losang Gawa (*blo bzang dga' wa*), then abbot of Rongwo Gön. Probably in 1626, Gyal Losang Nyima (*rgyal blo bzsang nyi ma*) established a college of philosophy in Gori Dratshang, which later developed into an institution with up to 200 monks and five tulku.⁶² Dowi is the home and Gori monastery the first place of Buddhist studies of one of China's greatest buddhologists in modern times, Sherab Gyatsho (*klu 'bum mkhan chen shes rab rgya mtsho*, 1883-1968)⁶³ who was honoured by erecting one of the bigger structures here. Formerly, there

were a sutra hall and seven larger and lesser temples (like gönkhang, Maitreya Hall, Arhat Hall, Kanjur Lakhang) plus eight residencies around a platform for monastic debates.

Since the start of rebuilding Gori Dratshang in 1980, 50 monks have returned to its grounds. Besides the monks' living quarters, there is an assembly hall and an impressive memorial hall for Sherab Gyatsho. Inside that building, which has become the most important structure of Gori Gompa, we find clay images of Tsongkhapa and Maitreya to the right of Sherab Gyatsho's burial stupa, and statues of Atisha and Manjushri on the left back side of the hall. The niches of the side walls are full of small Tsongkhapa images. Containing a big bell of about two tons' weight, given to the monastery as a present by China's State Council in 1961, the hall is also called Bell Tower. It is topped by a two-layered Chinese-style roof. An annex of the building shelters the monastery's gönkhang.

Dama Jomo Nunnery ('dab ma'i jo mo dgon pa, Chin. *Danma nigu Si*)⁶⁴ is located just about 9 km to the northwest of Gori Dratshang, and its site is easily recognized by its large stupa, the Dowi Chörten. The origin of both nunnery and stupa is unclear. It might be of an old age as the nuns still follow Nyingmapa tradition, which has become quite rare in this central part of Amdo.

A local legend relates the emergence of Dowi Chörten to the 84 mahasiddhas,⁶⁵ who are said to have erected the stupa containing a piece of Bodhgaya's Buddha relics. For this reason, Buddhists of the whole area make pilgrimages to the holy site. The part of the huge stupa that appears to rise out of the ground is a square-shaped mound of approx. 25 m across. On the latter the Saikangba Lama (Lobsang Tenzin Gyatsho, 1780-1848), one of the most influential tulku in Amdo, had the current chörten constructed. It stands on a square stone platform on the sides of which Tibetan-Buddhist incantations are engraved. On the stupa's four sides are small corridors containing prayer-wheels. They serve the pilgrims carrying out meritorious circumambulations.

The small sutra hall of Dama Jomo Nunnery lies to the eastern side of the chörten. The dukhang, wherein until 1958 some 30 nuns were doing religious services, is reconstructed and again looked after by a dozen Nyingmapa nuns. The main image inside the hall is a

clay statue of Padmasambhava, accompanied by his two principal yoginis. On his right side we also see depicted the Gelugpa triad of Tsongkhapa and his two main disciples.

Bimdo Gönchen: In a southwestern direction from Xunhua a road leads to Tongren, and after about 25 km we reach the community of Wendu (Bimdo in Tibetan), the 10th Panchen Lama Chögyi Gyaltshen's (1938-1989) hometown. The farm-house in which he was born can be reached from Xunhua. The monastery he had entered first is reached via Wendu on a 5 km mud-road across the spur of a mountain: Bimden Gönchen Tashi Chökhor Ling (*bis mdo'i dgon chen bkra shis chos 'khor gling*).⁶⁶ At its heyday it was a big lamasery, said to have had up to 500 monks. Its buildings seem to have covered more than five hectares of land. Since its reopening in 1980, the number of monks has exceeded the figure of 250.⁶⁷ Thus it is the biggest lamasery of the Xunhua area.

In historical perspective, Bimdo Gönchen is among the oldest monasteries of Amdo and of Qinghai province. Locals have it that there was already a small temple before the emergence of the Mongol-Chinese Yuan dynasty. At the time of Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) monks of his order erected a temple hall to worship protector deities near the village where we find the mosque today. After the Salar people had moved into that place, it was displaced and a Sakyapa gompa was erected at today's monastic site. In 1402, Lama Kashiwa Sherab Gyaltshen had a monastery built here. As he was one of the most intimate disciples of Tsongkhapa, some people regard Bimdo Gönchen as a kind of forerunner of the Gelugpa's earliest institution, Ganden.

Originally there were ten temple structures in Bimdo Gönchen, with the Tsuglakhang rising from a small plateau in the middle of a gully. A Hall of the Buddhas of the Three Ages, an Avalokiteshvara Temple and a gönkhang were all rebuilt in Tibetan style. Furthermore, Buddhist logics and Tantric knowledge were taught in two monastic colleges. The lamasery was looked after by 340 monks and ten tulku in 1958. The latter are among the most famous in Amdo, especially the foremost Yershong (*gyer gshong*) Lama. His second incarnation, Ngawang Gedün Dawa Dragpa (1734-1811) was granted the title of Erdeni Pandita Khutukhtu by the Qing court. By then, Bimdo Gompa was further enlarged, and a complete set of Dege's Kanjur edition and 20 volumes of Sakyapa scriptures were acquired.

The fame of Bimdo Gönchen's former exoteric college was well known all over Amdo. The full curriculum of studies took 29 years to complete, with five years studying vinaya and three years study for each of the other eight topics.

3.4.3. Jainca County (Centsha)

Jainca county takes in the northwestern part of Rongwo, its seat Maketang town being situated near the confluence of Rongwo's Gu Chu and the Yellow River. With a mainly sedentary Tibetan population of more than 60 %, Jainca is one of the rare strongholds of Nyingmapa in Amdo. Out of the former 25 gompas 10 belonged to this Buddhist tradition, while the Gelugpa with 15 lamaseries and somewhat short of 70 % of the monastic population (2,038 monks and nuns in 1955) did not have the same weight as in other areas of central Amdo.

Achung Namdzong: At the village of Kanbula (Tib. *Jangbula*), about 50 km upstream on the Yellow River, another part of the majestic canyon of this river is reached: Namdzong.⁶⁸ It is one of Amdo's four main power-places called *dzong* or *djung*,⁶⁹ designating natural chasms, which became famous meditation spots of Tibetan monks and are 'specifically symbolizing the mind aspect of Buddha-mind' (Gyurme Dorje).⁷⁰ In a richly forested area surrounded by red earth pinnacles and steep mountain slopes, we find a number of monasteries and temples, all with some connection to the holy site.

To the north of the central monastic complex is a mountain with the shape of the Tibetan letter A, and therefore the monastery is popularly called Achung Namdzong⁷¹ (Chin. *Aqiong Nanzong Si*). The regular name is Namdzong Sangdag Tengye Ling (*gnam rdzong gsang sdags bstan rgyas gling*). Though not a large place, it is the ideological core of the area. As it was a meditation site in common use from the early days of Buddhism in Amdo, the Three Worthies of Dentig monastery, Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung,⁷² stayed here for a while after they arrived in Amdo. They settled down in Dentig only later.

Thus, the site in *Namdzong Sangdag*, also called Dorje Dragra, was for centuries an attractive pilgrimage site. The main temple was constructed after 1685, when the area's most famous Nyingmapa tulku, Lama Pema Rinzin⁷³ came and established a monastery beneath the peaks. The place was originally marked only by five grottoes of which some

were natural caves and others hand-carved out of the rocks. They are supposed to have been the dwelling-place of the Three Worthies before they left to stay at Dentig mountain. Buildings included a dukhang, one temple and a lama residence. Only 18 monks lived here before its demolition in 1958. The rebuilding of the sutra hall and of some monks-cells has seen the return of five monks and of Mani, the 6th incarnation of Pema Rinjin.

The quality of construction in Achung Namdzong is exemplary, especially the excellent woodwork. The two main temples nowadays are a temple dedicated to Tara (Dölma Lhakhang) and the Guru Gönkhang, both still awaiting adequate interior decorations and fittings. At a slightly lower level we find a manikhang with water-driven prayer-wheels. Although the site is small, it is the centre for the Nyingmapa faithful of the surrounding region in Jainca and Guide counties. Therefore, there are numerous religious festivals throughout the year—especially in the third, fourth, ninth and twelfth lunar months. Most impressive is the 13th day of the fourth month, when mask dances and ceremonies attract large numbers of Buddhist spectators.

Some of the meditation places in the forested hills of Achung Namdzong developed into small branch monasteries, such as *Setsa Gompa* (*se rtса dgon pa*, Chin. *Nanzong Zha Si*). Some 30 monks and two tulku lived in the mud houses around the old dukhang before 1958. The latter fell into decay when no longer looked after and was restored with the return of a dozen monks only in the 1980s. As in other parts of Achung Namdzong, there are occasionally a number of Ngagpa or mantrins—mostly older men who had received some religious education and taken bodhisattva and mantra vows, but only a limited number of Vinaya vows.

To the north of Achung Namdzong's core temple we find the largest nunnery of central Amdo: *Namdzong Samten Phelgye Ling* (*gnam rdzong bsam gtan 'phel rgyas gling*, Chin. *Nanzong nigu Si*), also called Namdzong Jomo Gön (*gnam rdzong jomo'i dgon*). Local traditions have it that it was established during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1274-1368) by Nyingmapa Lama Gurong Tsang, whose reincarnation is still a leading figure in the region. In former times the fame of this nunnery is said to have spread across Amdo's bounds. Its buildings covered nearly three hectares before it was destroyed in 1958. At the time there were just 55 nuns and one

incarnation left. Since the rebuilding of the dukhang and living quarters, the number of young Tibetan women becoming nuns (*ani*) is growing steadily, and lately is said to have reached 200.

Although being a holy site of the Nyingmapa order, the Gelugpa also left their traces in Achung Namdzong area. From the nunnery 2 km further up the valley, Jainca's main lamasery Dechen Gompa (see below) established its branch *Kapug Gön Namdzong Tashi Namgyeling* (*rka phug dgon gnam rdzong bkra shis rnam rgyal gling*, Chin. *Gabu Si*). According to Lama Dragönpa, a peak lying on the opposite side of Namdzong Peak, about half a mile to the west of Namdzong Sangdag, is supposed to be the spot where Pälgyi Dorje, the murderer of King Langdarma (838-842) had taken refuge. After he had shot the last Yarlung dynasty ruler, Pälgyi Dorje finally reached Amdo, after a dramatic flight, and retired in Achung Namdzong.⁷⁴ There are some retreat caves in a steep cliff, a spectacular red hill called *Namdzong Tse*. Inside there are some traces of original murals.⁷⁵ The 3rd Kouwa Lama Chö Gyatsho (1571-1635) came here for long-term seclusion and meditation, and later Gelugpa Lama Kapug Losang Dündrub (1740-?) built a meditation hall on top of the mountain. In 1794, he had a Khamra'i Latshang built at Tashithang, the foot of the same hill. Out of these first structures developed the small Gelugpa monastery of Namdzong Tashi Ling.

Kouwa Monastery: The history of Kouwa Shedrub Dargye Ling (*ko'u ba bzhad sgrub dar rgyas gling*, Chin. *Guwa Si*)⁷⁶ gives another example of a monastery originally belonging to the Sakyapa order, then turned into a Gelugpa gompa. It is located about 20 km west of Jainca's county seat, Maketang town. About half-way to Cuozhou village (10 km) lies the nunnery of Lo Dorjedrag (*lo rdo rje brag*, Chin. *Zhihe Si* or *Jingang Ya Si*), the caves of which are another spot where the Three Worthies were supposed to have stayed after their flight from central Tibet.

As the Mongol emperors of the Yuan dynasty patronized the Sakyapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, Kouwa Shönnu Changchub Öser (*ko'u ba gzhon nu hyang chub 'od zer*) established this monastery about the mid-14th century (1341-1368). This lama had close relations to Chögyi Döndrub Rinchen, then abbot of Shyachung Gompa and tutor of Tsongkhapa. As Döndrub Rinchen had been invited to Kouwa to give sermons, Kouwa Shönnu in return

was invited to take part in Tsongkhapa's ordination into monkhood at Shyachung. After Döndrub Rinchen's death Kouwa Shönnu became the second abbot of Shyachung, later handing down this position to his nephew Chökyi Gyaltshen who expanded Kouwa Monastery, built an assembly hall and renamed it Kouwa Gönsar (*ko'u ba dgon gsar*), New Kouwa Monastery.

Another nephew of Kouwa Shönnu was Namkha Sengge, who became a disciple of Tsongkhapa. As a member of the Dayuan line handed down from Phagpa's disciple Dayuan Dzongren Chendra, he built the Dayuan Khamtsen⁷⁷ in Lhasa's Ganden monastery. That may have marked the beginning of Gelugpa influence on Kouwa Monastery, further intensified when Dönyö Sengge established Dayuan Khamtsen in Sera and Drepung monasteries respectively. This marked a further move in increasing the growing influence of Amdo lamas and monasteries in central Tibetan politics.⁷⁸

Chökyi Gyaltshen's nephew Kouwa Kadsu Chö Gyatsho (*ko'u ba dka' bcu chos rgya mtsho*), who became the 3rd Kouwa Lama, may have played the leading role in Kouwa Gompa's reconstitution as a Gelugpa monastery. Born in 1571, he was ordained by the 3rd Dalai Lama during the latter's visit to Amdo in 1584. Three years later he was sent to do further studies at Drepung monastery's Gomang college⁷⁹, where he received the high degree in 1596. After more studies of sutra and philosophy in Tsang province and taking the bhiksu vows from the 4th Panchen Lama in 1598, he returned to Amdo in 1604 and took on the duty of abbot of Kumbum Monastery from 1617 to 1623. After that he returned to his home town and had Kouwa Monastery restored, before he died in 1635 on his way to Kumbum. All this is to show that the Kouwa Chang line of the Sakyapa under his leadership had begun to convert to the Gelugpa order. Yet it still acted after the Sakyapa example in the institution of uncle-nephew inheritance of the abbot's position. This incarnation line declined by splitting up into two systems of lama incarnations, with one taking residence in Kouwa monastery and the other one in Tsongkhapa's Kumbum Jampa Ling. Thus, Kouwa Gön lost some influence, with the number of its monks decreasing to 60 at the time of the *Annals of Kokonor* (1786). It grew again and had 374 monks before its destruction in 1958. Of the former dukhang, two temple and two tulku residence buildings, only the assembly hall has been

rebuilt so far, and about 100 monks are back to render religious services.

Lamo Dechen: Jainca county town extends on the western bank of the Ma Chu (Yellow River), and behind the settlement and above the fields tower the multi-coloured rock layers of the magnificent Ma Chu Canyon. Going southwest, a 20 km drive on a spectacular road leading across its steep slopes brings one up to Nengke village, the houses of which link up with the structure of Lamo Dechen Monastery (*la mo bde chen chos 'khor gling*, Chin. *Deqian Si*).⁸⁰ It is one of the few Gelugpa lamaseries, though founded relatively late, about mid-17th century, that all the same became eminent. Today its modest size and average number of 250 monks obscures the former glory due to the renowned incarnate lamas who emerged from it. Furthermore, this monastery developed into one of the politico-religious centres which administered quite large areas.

The establishment of Lamo Dechen is traced back to the 3rd Lamo Rimpoche Ngawang Losang Tenpa'i Gyaltshen (*ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, 1660-1728). To understand Lamo Dechen's role, we have to start with a look at his predecessors.

The first Lamo Rimpoche was a native of Lamo village in Dagtse (east of Lhasa) and studied at the Lower Tantric College of Drepung Monastery, before the 3rd Dalai Lama sent him to Amdo to further propagate the Gelugpa doctrine. His first reincarnation, Lodrö Gyatsho (1610-1659), originated from a family of the Mongol Tümed tribe. His knowledge and wisdom became known for he lived in several monasteries along the Yellow River bend, and even Rongwo Gönchen's Chöpa Rimpoche expressed his admiration. At the time when the different Mongol tribes of Amdo finally were united under the guidance of Khoshot prince Gushri Khan, the Manchus conquered China and established the Qing dynasty. They both were looking to tighten their control of northeastern Tibet by continuing the old Yuan and Ming policy of strengthening the religious leadership of the area. For the establishment of a new monastery, the western bank of the Ma Chu was chosen. In 1646 Magur Monastery (*rma mgur rnam rgyal gling*, Chin. *Gulu Si*) was founded near today's Jainca county town, having developed from a mass of tents.

Ngawang Losang Tenpa'i Gyaltshen (1660-1728), the 3rd Lamo Rimpoche, born in the pastoral areas

to the northwest of the Amnye Machen mountains, was sent to study in central Tibet at the age of twelve. Due to sickness he came back the year after, but in 1679 entered Gomang College of Drepung Monastery. In 1680 his benefactors sent him to Amdo to make collections in a large area centred around Jainca, where Lamo Rimpoche founded Lamo Dechen Chökhor Ling in 1682. He shifted the college of philosophy of nearby Magur monastery to his new monastic centre, and in order to attract large numbers of monks, he had four temples built.

In 1705, the 3rd Lamo Rimpoche travelled to the Qing capital Beijing where the court bestowed on him the titles of Tshagan Nomon Khan and Chasak Lama. When on his way from Lithang in Kham to Kumbum Monastery, the 7th Dalai Lama met with Lamo Rimpoche, who was honoured with being one of his holiness' teachers. This not only meant that a strong relationship was established between the two, but 3rd Lamo also was given the title of Yachithu Tshigen Tshagan Nomon Khan (*ya chi thu ye tshig gen tsha gan no mon han*). He had great influence on the Mongolian tribes who were settling in large parts of northeastern and northern Tibet—in Amdo and Tsaidam as well as in the expanses of the Changthang steppes—and who regarded him as their main religious tutor. Thus this incarnation line, known as Shabdrung Karpo in Tibetan and 'White Buddha' (*bai fo*) in Chinese, developed as one of the most important and influential of all the lamas in Amdo. The most recent incarnation, the 8th Shabdrung Karpo, was—until his death in 1986—a deputy director of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Qinghai Province.

There were about 20 more incarnation lines, of which some also became influential. Serthri Rimpoche (*gser khri*, 'Golden Throne', Chin. *Saiqi huofo*) for instance, refers to the highest hierarchical position of the Gelugpa order, the Ganden Thrizin, and was one of the seven khutukhtus coming from Amdo and residing in Beijing. Jamyang Gyatsho (1689-1762), the first Serthri Lama, in 1693 was taken to the Chinese capital, where he was ordained as a bhiksu with the religious name of Losang Tenpe Nyima in 1727. He then acquired the study degree of a *lharampa*, following which the emperor bestowed him with the title of a Dhyana Master (*chanshi*) in 1734. When the former princely residence in the Yonghe Palace was turned over to the Lamaist community, it was Serthri Lama who was

entrusted with establishing this lamasery, the *Yonghegong*, nowadays commonly known as Beijing's Lama Temple. One year later, in 1743, he guided the opening ceremony and founded the four study faculties for sutra and Buddhist philosophy, Tantric studies, medicine and phonology. His learned writings belong to the most comprehensive works produced at the time.

The stipulations by Lamo Dechen for the entry of new monk candidates seem to have been quite strict. Generally the approval of the highest monastic council (*ganba huiyi*) was needed. This board, consisting of the 15 highest members of Lamo Dechen, decided on both internal and external affairs.

Looking at the singular facets of Lamo Dechen's background, it is not surprising that it developed to become one of the largest lamaseries in central Amdo. This politico-religious heart of west-central Amdo in 1958 had a built-up area of about 13 ha, including two assembly halls, 26 temple buildings and 24 lama residencies. Locals speak of as many as 51 tulku⁸¹s amidst 522 monks, and they owned 140 ha of farmland, more than 4,000 heads of yak and cows, 300 horses, 1600 sheep and 120 ha of forests. Of course, the fittings of the temples must have been magnificent. Lama Dragönpa in his *Political and Religious History of Amdo* (first half of the 19th century) noted that the most precious relics of the lamasery were the burial stupa of the 1st Lamo Rimpoche, a holy statue of Tsongkhapa, a 1.6-m-high gilded bronze Buddha image donated by Losang Tenpe Nyima, and several holy statues a metre high such as of Tsongkhapa, Maitreya and Manjushri, and Tara statues made of solid gold.

In 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution, the iconoclastic conflagration extinguished Lamo Dechen, just leaving a few lama residencies and some monks' houses of the monastic complex. After being reopened in 1980, it saw the reconstruction of a dukhang, five temple structures and the restoration of several tulku residencies. The decoration and fittings are made in typical Rebgong style, some of them still quite basic. About 250 monks live again within this historically important lamasery which is located among fields and beside some forest patches in high altitude above the Ma Chu Canyon. Of the former 40 branch monasteries of Lamo Dechen, 31 exist again and are scattered in the counties of Jainca, neighbouring Thrikha (Guide), Mangra (Guinan),

Bayan Khar (Hualong), Tongkhor (Huanguan) and Haiyan.

3.4.4. Guide County (Thrikha) & Guinan County (Mangra)

The Thrikha (*khri kha*)⁸² region of central Amdo occupies the western part of south-central Amdo and is framed by the Ma Chu when beginning its eastward flow at the northern Yellow River bend. The Chinese name of the county, Guide, is taken from the gorge through which the river passes here, and in 1953 a second county, Guinan ('Southern Gui[de]'), was separated administratively. Although it is the administrative and trade centre of the area called Thrikha in Tibetan, the small city at about 2270 m above sea level, has for long been a town dominated by Han-Chinese and Hui Muslims. The population of the whole county consists of about 55 % Han with the rest being Tibetans (32%) and Hui, Tu and Salar people. All the same, Guide county has more Tibetan monasteries than any other county in Amdo—formerly numbering about 90, with some 56 nowadays. 33 of these mostly quite small lamaseries belong to the Gelugpa order, 20 to the Nyingmapa and three belong to the Bön faith, which is rarely seen in Amdo.⁸³

During the first half of the 1st millennium AD the Guide region was the country of the Western Qiang tribes, later being absorbed by the kingdoms of Tuyuhun⁸⁴ tribes and of central Tibet's Tubo empire. Later local dynasties all had an important city located at this strategic point between pastoral and agricultural areas, and at the beginning of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1264-1294) a Guide Prefecture was established which was subject to the so-called Pacification Commissioner of the Tubo area.⁸⁵ A garrison was stationed here which seems to have been attacked after the decline of the Yuan.

Following the dynastic take-over in China by the Ming, the emperors in the early decades of their rule had an eye on all areas which had belonged to the empire of their predecessors. As such they also tried to exercise control over Tibetan territory. With local tribes trying to resist, the Chinese general Deng Yu was assigned the supreme command of the western Punitive Expedition. In 1370 he led his troops against the Mongol and Tibetan tribes of Amdo, destroying their encampments and breaking their resistance. In 1376 a Ming Chinese militia-like garrison was set up here in central Amdo and a chilarchy (*shouyu qianhusuo*)⁸⁶ named Guide established. In

1380 the massive Guide city mud wall was built that exists up to today,⁸⁷ and when it was restored two centuries later (1590-1592) Guide's other typical Han-Chinese temple-buildings were constructed, such as the Pavilion of the Jade Emperor (*Yuhuang Ge*) in town, the South Sea Hall and Wenchang Temple in its outskirts.

The existing military administration was reorganized in 1761. The appointment of a civilian magistrate to Xining introduced a joint civil-military administration to run the affairs of this central part of Amdo. As the population grew, so did the Chinese militia. Near the end of the 19th century, an increasing number were disbanded, the remaining militiamen disbanding after their land was sold in 1921. By then, the Muslim warlord family of Ma Bufang were already in control. The separation of Guinan county in 1953 provided an opportunity for the Tibetan tribes, living mainly in the grasslands and desert-like area to the south of Guide, to get an administrative entity in which they constituted a majority (75 %) of the county's population, though not all their monasteries will have been incorporated, as they lie beyond the administrative bounds in or near Guide county town.

Minyag Dratshang: Connected to Xining (115 km) and Kumbum to the north, Heyin town, the Guide county seat, lies across the Lhamori mountains. Despite its Chinese features with mud-brick houses and large outer walls, there is a Tibetan monastery just at the verge of the old city, not far from the Ming dynasty city wall, known as *Mien Si* in Chinese.⁸⁸ *Minyag Dratshang* (*mi nyag grwa tshang bkra shis chos 'phel gling*) named in Tibetan, is supposed to be the oldest temple or monastery of the Thrikha region. Traditionally it is said to have been established in about 870, when the Three Worthies came to northeastern Tibet.⁸⁹

However, the *Political and Religious History of Amdo* dates today's monastery to the beginning of the 18th century and sees the first Minyag tulku Lodrö Dargye (*blo gros dar rgyas*, 1675-1753) as its founder. In 1725 he became abbot of the Tantric college of Kumbum Monastery, before he took over the position of the latter's 27th Khempo (main abbot) in 1749-1752. The incarnation line of this lama took residence in Kumbum.

The outstanding architectural structure is the white *Minyag Chörten* (Chin. *Mien Ta*, *Guide Baita*⁹⁰) which for a long time was the largest stupa in Qinghai

province.⁹¹ It has a history of more than eleven centuries and is 557 years older than Guide town. According to historical records, it was erected in 823 when Yarlung Emperor Tri Rälpacen (Tride Tsugtsen, reign 806-841) reached here during one of his war campaigns. In 1244 Sakya Pandita held Buddhist ceremonies here, and following this event, the site became an important place of worship for all Buddhists in Amdo. The old structure, made of mud and walled in by bricks, was restored in 1943 as a combined wood-and-brick stupa, further fitted with nearly two kilos of gold in 1956, donated by an incarnate lama of Kumbum Monastery. When the gompa was destroyed in 1958, the chörten was saved first, yet fell a victim to the Cultural Revolution in the late sixties. The reconstruction was decided in 1986 and begun three years later, with the 28 m high white chörten being completed in 1990, some four metres higher than its predecessor.⁹² The lateral length of the stupa is 18 m, and it covers 324 square metres. In style it corresponds to the typical Tibetan form of a stupa: standing on a terraced platform, a square basement with snow-lions and double-vajra carries several plinths, before the white inverted dome with the Kalacakra sanctuary is attained. The top end of the yellow spire reaches as high as 30 m.

The monastery was enlarged by the 5th Minyag Lama Tshültrim Tenpe Nyima (*tshul khrims bstan pa'i nyi ma*, 1755-1817) in 1802, who brought large numbers of Buddha images, thangkas, a Kanjur and an edition of the works of Tsongkhapa from Kumbum to Minyag Dratshang. His successor Palden Tenpe Nyima (*dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma*, 1819-1901) established good relations with the Mongol families of the descendants of Gushri Khan. This led him several times to Mongolia. Thus he obtained funds to further enlarge Minyag Dratshang of which the number of monks grew to 30. The last expansion was done in 1956, when the Tibetan-style brick building of the sutra hall offered space (286 m²) to 20 monks and 2 tulkus. The structure of the assembly hall survived the Cultural Revolution, with its fittings being lost. Outside the dukhang, there are still a few old woodworks to be seen. Inside the hall we find new decorations and statues done by Rebgong artists. By 1992 eight monks had returned to Minyag Dratshang.

Gongba Dratshang: Another monastery of considerable size near the county seat is *Gongba Si* or

Gongba Dratshang (*gong ba grwa tshang thos bsam dar rgyas gling*).⁹³ It is reached by driving eastward across the long bridge over a Ma Chu tributary and then turning south in Hedong village. Halfway from Guide-Heyin to Gongba one passes by Jojö Lhakhang.⁹⁴ Gongba Dratshang lies about 2 km south of Hedong village to the left-hand side when moving south.

In the 14th century there were two Sakyapa temples in the two villages of Gongba and Marpa here. When Lama Gongge Kachupa (*gong dge dka' bcu pa*, 1387-1446) returned home to Gongba between 1426 and 1435 after the end of his studies in central Tibet's Tashilhünpo monastery, he united the two temples into one, had an assembly hall built and so founded the Gelugpa monastery of Gongba Dratshang. He incarnated only three times, thus ending the tulku line before the lamas of the incarnate Tshendrog Khempo line (*mtshan sgrogs mkhan po*) attended to this monastery. The first Tshendrog Gedün Döndrub (*dge 'dun don grub*, 1668-?) left Gongba village to study in Drepung Monastery and became abbot of Lhasa's Jokhang, Tibet's most holy temple site. Upon his return home, he enlarged Gongba Dratshang and in 1734 became Kumbum Lamasery's khempo. His successors established an incarnation line with residence in Kumbum, thus making Gongba Dratshang a branch of the latter.

During the Muslim upsurge in 1867, the dukhang, Maitreya Temple and other buildings of the monastery were destroyed by warfare. After its reconstruction six years later, the lamasery occupied an area of nearly five hectares until 1958, surrounded by a rectangular mud-and-brick wall of 880 m length, 5 m high and 1 m in diameter. The monastic complex, which faces south, consisted of a large assembly hall, temples dedicated to Samantabhadra and Manjushri (before 1867 to Maitreya), two lesser sutra halls and four lama residencies near the outer wall's corners. The temple structures were two-storeyed mud and wood buildings in Tibetan style, like the Kalacakra and the gate chörten on the western and northern side of the lamasery. At its heyday, Gongba Dratshang is said to have had 500 monks, but just 104 in 1956. Since its reopening in 1981, 60 monks and two incarnate lamas are back to religious service. Although the large expanse of the lamasery is easily perceived from the hill at its rear, only the assembly hall, a residence and the monks' quarters were rebuilt by 1993. The dukhang is a brick build-

ing with typical Tibetan features that by then still awaited further decoration and fittings.

The Thrikha area, although it is an ethnically mixed region, has a big number of Buddhist monasteries. However, an appreciation of the numerous monasteries cannot be written up here, as neither visits to these nor sufficient available records allow to deal with them in detail. We may conclude by noting that 13-15 km to the southwest of Guide town two of the county's Bön monasteries are located: Chyangmo'i Yungdrung Phüntsholing (*khyang mo'i dgon gyung drung phun tshogs gling*, Chin. Quemao Si) and Tongche Gömpa (*stong che'i bon dgon*, Chin. Dangche Si). The third one is Sekya Gömpa (*se kya'i bon dgon*, Chin. Serjia Si), about 15 km southeast of Guide-Heyin in Sekya village. The number of Bön believers is small though and accounts for less than a 100 at either sanctuary, the latter consisting mainly of an assembly hall and some simple houses. Thus, Thrikha stands for one of the few last relics of Bön religion in Amdo.

3.5. The Sutra Walls of Hor

The influence of Rebgong lamas and the monasteries of the Yellow River bend reached as far south as the steppe areas of Tsekhog (Chin. Zeku Xian), a county that with its population of 94 % Tibetans belongs to the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Huangnan (Tib. Malho). As the people here are predominantly pastoralists, larger monastic establishments were only founded in later centuries, though there had been movable tent monasteries all around for a long time. It is difficult to obtain reliable data on their history. It seems that when the Rebgong tribes of the Rongwo valley experienced a significant increase in their population, more and more of them moved their herds into the Tsekhog grasslands, and as such monks of the Gelugpa and Nyingmapa orders followed them. In 1958, of the 14 lamaseries in Tsekhog county, eight of them belonged to the Gelugpa order and six to the Nyingmapa. With about 1,400 residents under the guidance of 26 incarnate lamas, 7.5 % of the area's population were monks.

Nowadays, after reopening most of the former monastic centres, some 300 to 400 monks live there, while another 900 to 1,000 itinerant monks move around using tent camp monasteries. Thus, with the exception of Hor Gompa, all of Tsekhog's lamaseries became resident only in the course of the 20th century—with the earliest among them in 1916 (*Drubpa'i Nechen Dragkar Dechen 'Jigdze Dorje*

Dzong) and the latest in 1958 (*Dzongmar Tashi Chöling*), and one even after the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s (*Chakor Gartse Gompa*).⁹⁵ Amegur still exists as a tent lamasery, with a yurt serving as sutra hall. It is supposed to contain a Buddha image brought by Phagpa (1235–1280) during his journey from central Tibet to the Mongol Khan's court.

The oldest domiciled monastery in the Tsekhog grasslands therefore is Hor Gompa (*hor dgon*), called Heri Si in Chinese, with the full name of Thegchog Tashiling (*theg mchog bkra shis gling*).⁹⁶ It is located near Hor village, about 80 km to the northwest of Tsekhog, and on the right-hand side when following the main road leading to the cross-roads with the main highway from Xining via Guide to Machen. Therefore it is easily reached from the respective highway crossings when coming from Guide (12 km from the intersection), Tongde or Maqin (25 km from the intersection). There are no signposts, and the direction should be asked for even though the tracks leading into the grassland may be noticed easily.

Hor Gompa is a Nyingmapa monastery that for long had existed in the form of an itinerant tent camp. The first buildings made of mud walls were built in 1831 by the 1st Tertön Lama. As he was supported by the local Hor (Mongolian) tribe's chieftain, he had the monastery constructed near the latter's main residence, at a hill near Ningxiu village called Wojje Otunlang. Under the guidance of the 2nd Tertön Lama (b. in 1862) the assembly hall was enlarged, embellished, and decorated by murals, and clay images were made. Furthermore he established a Dratshang, a study faculty, which helped to develop the lamasery into a flourishing institution with some 300 monks. Having so many residents Hor Gompa was running out of water, and therefore the 3rd Tertön Lama Jigme Sanggye Tendzin (b. 1893) shifted the monastery to the current site, being two kilometres south of Hor village (*Heri xiang Zhihejia*). In 1955 it was a complex consisting of two temple buildings, two chörten and 120 monks' quarters. Including the mantrins who stayed here for a while, there were 340 people all in all (190 women among them).

Although there are fewer monks and mantrins now (about 70 monks), the monastery that was destroyed in 1958 and reopened in 1981 seems to have grown into its former size—with a row of eight white

chörten behind a larger one, the main assembly hall and a further temple building. The dukhang, designed in typical Tibetan architectural style, is well equipped with Rebgong murals and clay statues. It faces a courtyard to the left side of which stands a pagoda-like structure with a three-layered roof covered by yellow glazed tiles. The wooden panels between the roof layers are nicely painted with Rebgong-style ornaments, the main statue in the inside being a monumental gilded Padmasambhava, framed by two colourful dragons.

However, the main historical and culturally very impressive sight is that of the stone sutra walls (Chin. *shijing qiang*) on the hillock to the rear of Hor Gompa. Like typical mani stone walls (Tib. *mendong*) these sutra walls consist of flagstones, loosely piled up and bearing inscriptions or engraved images. The origin of this custom lies in pre-Buddhist worship of nature and deities related to it, which in Tibet is generally referred to as the Bön religious system. As ancestors, animistic powers, and nature-deities dominate the worldly spheres, it was necessary to worship and offer sacrifices to them. According to Chinese annals⁹⁷ Tibetans at the time of the early Yarlung Empire

would hold a grand ceremony of sacrificial offerings every three years in which a simple sacrificial altar would be piled up with stones on which 'there remained several rough cut lines representing strange marks and spells when killing animals for sacrifice'.⁹⁸

Later this custom was combined with the worship for Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the simple altar was also changed into mani stones and walls carved with Buddhist images, texts and spells.

The mani-walls of Hor Gön are actually carved with Buddhist scriptures of the Tibetan Tripitaka and not with the holy mantra *Om ma ni pad me hum* or similar ones—although such also exist here. Above Hor Gön, there are remains of four different sutra walls, altogether accounting for a length of about 600 m and containing stone slabs inscribed with nearly 200 million letters. Besides there are some 2,000 flagstones depicting images of Buddha, bodhisattvas, protector deities, lamas and chörten. Chinese sources call the place the 'world's stone book wonder'. It was created between 1923 and 1951 under the direction of Tertön Lama and Logyatshang

Rimpoché. Mostly in the 1930s, it is said, there were on average about 50 monks and folk artists hired from outside the monastery working on the completion of the carved sutras and Buddha images. The sutra walls were only partially destroyed in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution; missing parts have been restored since 1981.

The central sutra wall above the monastery's main assembly hall is 165 m long, 2 m wide and 1.1 m high. The stone slabs are 1 to 5 cm thick, engraved on both sides, and carry the scriptures of the Kanjur (*bka' 'gyur*), 'Words of Buddha'. The whole Kanjur exists in two editions with altogether 39,660,000 letters. Near the eastern end of this sutra wall, there is a sutra stone heap in a square layout with a lateral length of 9 m, regularly piled up to a height of 10 m. The flagstones of this wall are inscribed with the Tanjur (*bstan 'gyur*), having more than 3,870,000 letters. Still further east another stone wall is found, on the stone slabs of which 108 volumes of the Thardo (*thar mdo*) are engraved. 120 m from the western end of the Kanjur stone wall is a fourth sutra stone heap, 15 m long, 1.3 to 1.58 m wide and 1.2 m high. There are a further 17 different sutra scriptures carved on its stone slabs.

Thus, besides Kanjur and Tanjur—with their 4,673 parts recording Buddha's words, the doctrine and discipline he taught, commentaries and many more scientific, technical and cultural works—the four mendong of Hor Gön also contain the Bhadrakalpa and Mahapramittra sutras. In the mani walls' sides, in niches and on shelves, about 2,000 enshrined flagstones, either grey or painted in many colours, depict Buddha Shakyamuni, Amitabha, Menla (Medicine Buddha), Padmasambhava, Thangtong Gyalpo, the 84 Mahasiddhas, and many other figures.

It is somewhat astounding that although true stone sculptures are rarely seen in Tibetan areas, stone relief work is widely spread and mostly exquisitely done. Along the pilgrimage paths leading to holy places or passing by dangerous spots (fords, passes, gorges), rock-cut images often can be seen. The custom of piling up mani-stones bearing the holy mantras of Avalokiteshvara (*om mani padme hum*) or other important deities and depicting well-carved images of the latter are most widely spread across the whole Tibetan Highland. They combine the wish for assembling good karma for the donor with his wish of being protected by the deities to whom the

mantra in stone or the image offer is sacrificed. These mani stones are difficult to date as further inscriptions or elements which may hint at the creator or the time of the creation are missing. It is considered as certain, that the development of mani-stones was influenced both from India, Nepal and China.

Buddhist iconometry was, and is, a decisive factor influencing Tibetan artistic styles, and thus carving both on rocks and flagstones was endowed with a special style and charm given by the Buddhist works of Indo-Nepalese artists, and laid down in the Buddhist iconometric three texts and one commentary *Dasatala-nyagrodha-praimandala-buddha-pratima-laksananama*, *Sambuddha-bhasta-pratima-laksana-vivarana-nama*, *Pratima-mana-laksana-nama*, and *Citra-laksana*.⁹⁹ On the other hand, Chinese influence on the development of Tibetan art, and hence also on stone-carving, started at the latest in the 7th century, when Tang princess Wencheng was accompanied on her way to Tibet by many highly-skilled craftsmen of the Middle Kingdom. Some people perceive

even at present, the flavour of the 'Tang Style' such as the plump figure and exquisite and smooth lines ... clearly seen in the art of Tibetan stone carvings. Meanwhile, the appearance of a lot of line carving works in Tibetan stone carvings were also influenced by the style of line drawing which was prevalent in the interior of China.¹⁰⁰

Mendong consisting of complete editions of holy scriptures are rarely seen and seem to be a specialty of Amdo, unless they were simply lost in Tibet's other regions. On the other hand it is likely that this piling up of sutras in stone is a temporary culminating point of the mani-wall development. Apart from the sutra mani-walls of Hor Gön, there is another impressive example of this Tibetan religious art. It is similarly found in a predominantly pastoral region: Gande county of the Ngolok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. As in the Tsekhog grasslands, monasteries here also became permanent within the last century—with a single residential one out of ten tent monasteries in 1954.

Located 12 km southwest of Gande county town—which is reached via Maqin (83 km)—lies the monastery Donggyü Dokha Gön Tennyir Dargyeling (*sdong rgyud rdo kha dgon bstan gnyir dar rgyas*

gling). Although having more than 200 monks and 13 incarnate lamas in 1958, it was an itinerant tent monastery until 1981, when the first mud dwellings were built to house the monks. In the heart of the lamasery, which fosters both Nyingmapa and Gelugpa traditions, we not only find the new two-storeyed assembly hall, but a giant mani-wall as well. Again, there is a complete set of the Tibetan Tripitaka engraved on grey flagstones. While some of these are thinner than the rim of a bowl, others exceed a thickness of 30 cm. The writings in either *Uchen* or *Lantsha* script are exquisitely carved as are the various stone slabs depicting Buddha Shakyamuni, Arhats and other images such as the Tubo-kings Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen, eminent

monks, Padmasambhava, Thangtong Gyalpo, Tsongkhapa, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, dharmapalas. They are enshrined in niches which fit into the sides of the stone sutra wall. The images were carved in both rough and minute lines, and mostly they are richly painted with mineral colours, appearing elegant and harmonious.¹⁰¹

Up to now, even these fine examples of stone-carved artefacts are hardly known; they do not seem to be the only ones. Other stone sutras may exist—at least, we can report on two more, one in Pema county's Cagri Gön and another one in Dzamthang county's Dzikhog region.¹⁰² However, these examples should not be confused with ordinary mendong, however impressive they may be.¹⁰³

Mendong (literally 'stone tablet') is a body of manuscripts and stone inscriptions which contain the entire Tripitaka. It is a very common form of Buddhist iconography in Tibet. There are also stone slabs depicting figures from the lives of the Buddha and his immediate followers, and other figures from Buddhist legends. These are often found in monasteries and temples, and are usually made of grey flagstone.

For example, in the *Yarlung* region, there is a large stone slab depicting the life of the Buddha. It shows the Buddha in various stages of his life, from his birth to his death. The slab is made of grey flagstone and is located in a temple in the *Yarlung* region. Another example is a stone slab depicting the life of the Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara*. This slab is also made of grey flagstone and is located in a temple in the *Yarlung* region. Both of these stone slabs are very well preserved and are considered to be important historical artifacts.

There are also many other stone slabs depicting figures from the lives of the Buddha and his immediate followers, and other figures from Buddhist legends. These are often found in monasteries and temples, and are usually made of grey flagstone.

4. Lamaist sites of the Amnye Machen Region

The significance of holy mountains, and here especially of the Amnye Machen Range's main peak Machen Kangri, is of pre-Buddhist nature. However, the mountain developed as a Buddhist pilgrimage site ever since the main population of the area, the Ngolok nomads, converted to the Buddhist Doctrine. Consequently the region saw the establishment of quite a number of monastic centres both near the pilgrimage circuit and in more distant, fertile regions. The most famous lamaseries were located near important trade routes, such as the Gelugpa monasteries Ragya Gompa and Tsanggar Gompa, while further southeast the Nyingmapa and other Buddhist orders remained dominant in the grasslands concerned. Before taking a look at the most important of those lamaseries, we will briefly discuss the significance of a holy mountain, using the example of Mt. Amnye Machen, and what impact it had on the development of several cultural sites along its pilgrimage circuit.

4.1. Amnye Machen: Holy Mountain and Pilgrimage Circuit

The Amnye Machen¹ mountain range (Chin. *Animaqing Shan*) stretches about 400 km from west to east and lies within the southern bend of the Ma Chu. Its central massif around the main dome of Machen Kangri (6268 m) extends about 10 km in width and 28 km in length, including twelve more peaks with a height above 5900 m. The central peak, which is exceeded by the highest one, Chenresi Peak (6282 m), is regarded as the seat of the mountain deity Machen Pomra² and thus revered by the honorific title 'Amnye'³—Amnye *rma rgyal chen po spom ra*, 'Great [Ancestor] Ma-King Pomra'. He is considered the powerful local *sa bdag*,⁴ i.e. local protector god:

It is said that if those afflicted with leprosy lie upon the sides of that snow-mountain and drink of its snow-waters, that are delivered from that disease.⁵

Machen Pomra is one of the most important protector deities, of both the Tibetan Highland and the most sacred mountain in Amdo, and especially of the Ngolok tribes. He has always been looked upon as the great legendary ancestor of the tribes living near the upper reaches of the river Ma Chu; the significance of the holy mountain was that of being the place of the kinship's origins.⁶ The latter's life-energy, *bla*, thus is rooted in the mountain, which at the same time is the donor of fertility and wealth. The name of the old Bönist protector is Manyen Pomra (*rma gyan spom ra*). Not surprising in a pastoral society with a long martial tradition, the iconographic portrayal of the mountain god is that of a war-god or warrior, and as such Machen Pomra also became the protector deity of the epic herald King Gesar. His magical sword is supposed to be buried in the depth of the mountain. As Tsongkhapa, the great reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, chose Machen Pomra to be the special protector of Ganden Monastery, the deity is no longer just of local importance. The worship of Machen Pomra was integrated into the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, although the god is considered a layman. For that reason even the abbots of the great lamaseries of Labrang, Ragya and Rongwo come here for pilgrimage. There are special ceremonial thrones from which to deliver their teachings while on pilgrimage.

Even until the first half of the 20th century Ngolok tribes of the area prevented foreigners from reaching their most sacred mountain. Legends have it that formerly the princess (or queen) of the local Tibetans had to offer a sacrifice to the mountain deity, walking alone and naked towards the white snow peaks. Thus she was mediating between the gods residing on the mountains and the nomads living in the vast steppes around it.⁷ The latter showed their personal reverence by circumambulating the central peak region on a pilgrimage path of 120-150 km in

length. It is said that before 1949, in every horse-year of the Tibetan calendar, about 10,000 Ngoloks made the pilgrimage, because at that time the accumulated merit is believed to be extraordinarily great. It takes ordinary pilgrims seven days on foot; going around by doing prostrations, i.e. by measuring the length of the path with one's own body, is said to take two months.

4.1.1. The pilgrimage circuit

The traditional starting point for the trail around holy Amnye Machen lies to the massif's southwest at Chörten Karpo, a valley junction marked by a big white Tibetan stupa. The place can be reached by car on a reasonably maintained dirt road leading from Dawu town of Machen county (Chin. *Maqin xian*) 110 km away to the nearby community of Xueshan (*Chuwarna*). The chörten is surrounded by a wall of square layout, along which the pilgrims turn the big prayer-wheels when circumambulating the stupa. Adjacent to the back side is a large mani wall, called Gonying Mani Lhatse, with the hill above it dotted with prayer-flags.

As the Tibetan Buddhists' circumambulation of the mountain should be done in a clock-wise direction, the first stage is an easy walk along the road leading southwest through the sparsely forested gorge of the Yönkhog River. Most foreigners either start their tour from a junction called Tselnak Khamdo (Chin. *Xueshan sanchakou*) or from Tawo Shölma (Chin. *Xia Dawu*) on the mountain's northwestern side.

The trail from Tselnak Khamdo starts with a motorable jeep-track which nature has reclaimed on certain sections. Before it really starts to climb the grassy slopes to the first mountain pass, it turns into a path consisting of footmarks and animals' tracks. Approaching the top of Tamchog Gongma La, the snow-capped peaks of the central massif come into view. Eighteen ice-covered peaks of more than 5,000 and 6,000 m height belong to it; they are supposed to be the nine sons and nine daughters of Machen Pomra. Furthermore the mountain god is accompanied by 360 brothers and clan relatives, called *rma rigs gsum brgya drug cu*, and more than 1,500 heroic warriors—all of them symbolized by the endless row of peaks along the entire mountain range.⁸

The broad saddle of the pass, stretching for several kilometres at a more or less constant height, offers impressive outlooks to the realm of Mt. Amnye

Machen. Standing by the lhatse on top of the pass, by the mani-wall and yak skulls bearing mystic mantras, it is not difficult to grasp the atmosphere that has made the area a sacred place. The most significant peak seen from the southern side of the massif is one of the three highest ones, and as such named in honour of the Bodhisattva of Mercy, Chenresig (*spyan ras gzigs*, Skr. Avalokiteshvara).

A long descent on the western side of Tamchog Gongma La passes by a curious rock formation named Mowatorwa, where there are meditation caves, and eventually leads into a large plain called Nganggi Shogdeb. Not far from here the pilgrim notices the yellow sand dunes at Jema Dride, which are seen as an offering to the gods. Continuing on the trail to the western side of the massif, we

come to a place called Gos-sku-chhen-mo (Gö-ku chhen-mo) or the Great Painting; the name is derived from the varicolored rocky cliffs of which the steep slopes of the Am-nye Ma-chhen Range is here composed; the rocks are of all colors giving the cliff the aspect of a great painting. Near the cliff are two conical hills, one called Mo-pa ..., and the other gtor-ba or tor-wa, the thrower of the gtor-ma or offerings to the gods. ... The place or hill is so called because around and about it are many rocks representing the gtor-ma or offerings which the tor-wa has thrown out.⁹

Legend has it that the multicoloured cliffs of Göku Chenmo mark the entrance to Machen Pomra's crystal palace. Further on the waters of Dölma Gur Chu are reached. For a short while the trail follows its course. Then the path leads on a spur above it across Gethung La, where there is a rock and an oblong stone resembling a handle. According to tradition, King Gesar of Ling tied his horse at this place when resting on the pass. While the view back offers another impressive panorama of the main peaks of Amnye Machen, the other side leads into a wider valley. There somewhat gentle slopes covered with green meadows and alpine flowers obstruct the view of the summits. Passing by another mani-wall, the stone slabs of which bear sutra scriptures rather than mantras, with prayer flags and a sacred cave by its side, the vast plain near Tawo Dölma is finally reached.

On a slope on the northwest side of the confluence of Niwagu and Quxian rivers Guri Monastery can

be seen from afar. As it lies at a distance of only some kilometres from the village of Tawo Shölma, it is also called Tawo Shölma Monastery. To reach Guri Gompa from the circumambulating trail around Machen Kangri, pilgrims and visitors need first to ford two rivers and then turn away from the pilgrimage path.

4.1.2. Guri Monastery

Guri Monastery ('*gu ri dgon pa*) , called Geri Si in Chinese, was originally located near the traditional starting point of the pilgrimage path, on the northeastern side of Machen Kangri near Xueshan village. Now situated to the mountains' northwest, it can be reached by car on a jeep track from Huashixia (Tib. *Tsogyenrawa*; 61 km) on the Xining-Yushu main road. This Nyingmapa lamasery is a branch of Dege's Dzogchen Gompa in central Kham.¹⁰ The latter's incarnate lama Lhalung Peldor came to Amnye Machen at the beginning of the 20th century in order to spread the Dzogchen teachings. He first taught in a tent camp which in 1952 was turned into a domiciled monastic complex, having 80 to 120 monks until its destruction six years later (1958). The reopening of Guri Gompa in 1981 relocated it to the grasslands of today's site.

The few monks and approximately 100 mantrins, who seem to be the majority of the practitioners here, now live in a Nyingmapa lamasery probably bigger than the one before. There was just one temple hall in 1957, while there are a dukhang, two temples and the lama's residence now lying in between simple adobe houses of the ordinary monks. They are all nicely fitted with new paintings and clay statues, showing beautiful images in the assembly hall of Padmasambhava, Shantaraksita, of Emperor ('religious king') Trisong Detsen, the White and Green Taras, Vairocana, Vajrasattva, a four-armed and eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara, Machen Pomra and Thangtong Gyalpo. Next to it stands a reliquary chapel for the remains of lama Thubten Tshering, successor of the above-mentioned Lhalung Peldor. Images of Padmasambhava and of three deities who stand for longevity (Amitayus, White Tara, Vijaya) can be seen in here.

The lama's residence is built against the western slope, and has statues of Padmasambhava, Jigme Lingpa and Thangtong Gyalpo. Among the books kept in here, Buddhist and Bönpo pilgrimage guides to Amnye Machen are found. Behind the residence,

the protectors' temple (*gönkhang*) honours King Gesar of Ling by its main image, accompanied by Thangtong Gyalpo and Machen Pomra, the god of the sacred mountain, who are portrayed in the murals. We may also see some larger coloured tshatshas of Dakinis as well as a few masks.

When continuing on the pilgrimage path, one has to come down from Guri Gompa and follow the trail that passes by another large site serving the worship of Machen Pomra. It is a large lhatsé, covered with numerous mani stones, hung with prayer-flags, with a nearby altar and a ceremonial throne from which high lamas give teachings when on pilgrimage. After crossing the relatively low pass of Dragdo Wangchug La, the ultimate height of 4328 m is reached at Dragdo Latse Chogön pass after a full day's trek from Guri. Another lhatsé stands facing the glacier which thrusts down from the side of Dradül Lungshog, the northernmost and highest peak of Machen Kangri's central massif. The impressive sight from near the glacier is matched by a more distant panoramic view from the bottom of the Yekhog valley. Half way down to the white chörten at the circuit's starting point, pilgrims can see Amnye Machen's three main ice-covered peaks and maybe feel their blessing. Taking leave, pilgrims head into the deep gorges leading to Machen's Xueshan village.

4.2. Ragya Monastery

Buddhist faith in the Ngolok area is predominantly imprinted by the teachings of the Nyingmapa order, which holds about 45 out of 63 monasteries in Ngolok Prefecture.¹¹ Nevertheless, the most famous and most important monastic institution there is said to be the Gelugpa lamasery of Ragya Gompa (*rva rgya dgon pa*, Chin. *Lajia Si*, Pinyin *Ragya-goinba*).¹² It is situated on the northern bank of the Yellow River, just beside the main road leading from Xining (km 370) via Guide to Maqin, Ngolok's prefectoral capital. Administratively it did not belong to Ngolok Prefecture until 1957, when the borderlines were newly drawn around the grounds of the monastic complex. The rest of the Ma Chu's northern bank is part of Tibetan Hainan Prefecture. Thus it could be seen as an interesting demonstration of a political claim of Gelugpa hegemony over an area that is nearly entirely held by Nyingmapa believers, or vice-versa.

During the two and a half centuries since its establishment, Ragya Gompa was a significant Gelugpa outpost on the threshold of the Ngolok region. Controlling one of the most important rivercrossings, and thus the regional trade, it could exert stronger influence only on the northernmost tribes of the Ngolok. Even as late as J. F. Rock's expedition here in 1926, the abbot of Ragya Gompa admitted 'that he personally was only on friendly terms with the chiefs' across the Yellow River'.¹³ Consequently the few other Gelugpa institutions in the Ngolok area—just six more throughout the huge prefecture—were mostly founded very late: between the end of the 19th century and the 1940s.¹⁴

The most commonly used name of the monastery is derived from a local appellation, while its full name has several variations: Ganden Tashi Chungne (*dga' ldan bkra shis 'byung gnas*), Tashi Kündé Ling (*bkra shis kun bde gling*), as well as Shedrub Jampa Ling (*bshad sgrub byams pa gling*).¹⁵ As it lies at just about 3050 m above sea level, there is farming and the fields around it are tilled. According to tradition, Han-Chinese soldiers were already opening up ground for agriculture at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (14th-15th centuries).

The buildings of Ragya Lamasery are scattered around the foot of sacred Mt. Amnye Chungngön (*a me khyung sngon*), a striking sandstone conglomerate cliff that rises more than 500 m high above the Yellow River. It is considered to be the place where the mountain deity Chungngön, the Blue Garuda, has taken residence.

Ragya Gompa was not established at the same time as Labrang, i.e., at the beginning of the 18th century, the exact date given in chronicles being 1769. At the age of seventeen its founder Gyantsen Öserwa (*rgyal mtshan 'od zer ba*, 1726-1803) went to central Tibet where he studied at the various colleges of Lhasa's Sera Monastery. As he was born among the Arig tribe,¹⁶ he became known as Arig Geshe, the Buddhist master of Arig. It was the 7th Dalai Lama who sent him back to Amdo in order to build a monastery in southern Amdo, Ragya Gompa, which was to become the biggest and most important lamasery on the banks of the Yellow River. The teaching materials he introduced in the exoteric college of the newly founded monastery were those of Sera's Jepa Dratshang. Later on, colleges for the study of Tantras, Kalacakra/astronomy and medicine were established as well.

In 1793, Arig Geshe transferred the guidance of Ragya Gompa to a tulku of Kumbum Monastery, the 2nd Shingtsa Pandita (*bla ma shing bza' pandita*) Lobsang Dargye (1759-1824), who is seen as the incarnation of Tsongkhapa's mother Shingtsa Ache (*shing bza' a che*).¹⁷ His predecessor, like himself, was a native of the Arig region to the east of Ragya, and up to the present reincarnated five more times. The actual bestowing of the title Shingtsa Pandita happened when the 13th lama of the incarnation line established relations with the Qing imperial court during the Guangxu reign (1875-1908). He became one of the most influential tulku of Amdo, with residential buildings not only in Kumbum Jampa Ling, but in Dechen Gompa and Rongwo as well.

This influence on the one hand was due to intellectual abilities and the highly acclaimed religious teachings of Ragya lamas, but the fusion with political interests also brought about a certain corruption of the system. Although spiritual teachers at other monasteries were similarly involved in secular affairs, the case of Ragya Gompa is well documented by Rock. The American researcher stayed there about the time it was to become the seat of Tongde county.¹⁸ That administrative unit was established by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT, *Guomindang*) government which also conferred on Shingtsa Pandita the title of a Dharma Master of Universal Aid (*puji fashi*). Most interestingly, one of Rock's Tibetan companions gave him an intriguing account of his personal view of the lama incarnation system at the time:

The Living Buddha business, he said, was a political or diplomatic system and always worked out for the good of the rich and influential. The local Buddha was very rich; so was his steward; and when 'reincarnations' occurred, it seemed to him that this 'miracle' always happened just as it might have been desired by the chief Buddha. For example, when the daughter of a powerful chief dies, she was soon afterward incarnated in the person of a small boy, a nephew of the Buddha's steward - a business and political arrangement agreeable to all concerned! When one of the minor Buddhas of Radja died he, too, was happily, conveniently, and quickly reincarnated, this time in the person of the steward's brother!

I smiled and asked the water-carrier how it happened that none of his children was the reincarnation of some departed Buddha. With a twinkle in his eye, he remarked that it was because the sum of all his worldly goods was two goats.¹⁹

During Ragya Monastery's heyday, there were all in all 29 incarnate lamas living among more than 1,300 monks. In 1949, the time of the Chinese Communist Revolution, the monastic population still amounted to 811, with 16 tulku among them. It seems that, after one of the lamasery's highest monk officials became head of Tongde county and Hainan Prefecture, the number of monks in Ragya grew again, for some sources quote more than 1,000 or even 1,300 monks in 1958. After it was handed over to the enlarged Ngolok prefecture in 1957, the lamasery was attacked and demolished twice between 1958 and the Cultural Revolution. It is hard to imagine that its complete destruction had to do only with Chinese communist ideology, and not in any way with the frequent local tensions between the different tribal and religious groups...

The original monastic complex of Ragya as it existed in 1958 occupied an area of about 46 hectares. The main building, a huge three-storeyed Tsuglakhang named Thösamling, could hold as many as 1,000 monks for collective prayer. In the lower section five study faculties were accommodated (upper and lower Tantric, exoterics, astronomy/Kalacakra, and medicine). While Rock noticed eight major temples of which two had more than two storeys and two large square buildings, Chinese sources during the 1950s registered altogether twelve temple buildings plus tulku residencies. One of the structures with a square layout was the printing-works with Shingsa Pandita's residence at the back. Its reconstructed buildings are said to house 50,000 wooden printing-blocks of the Kanjur up to the present. The most famous scriptures of Ragya Gompa were another set of Kanjur, a Dege edition written in golden letters. These were lost in a blaze in 1959, when the Tsuglakhang burnt down. In 1827, one of the most important Tibetan publications on calendar and astrology was edited here, as were many more learned books dealing with logics and the theory of argument and reasoning, among others.

At the highest spot within the monastic complex, there is a Panchen Palace on the slope of Amnye Chungngön mountain. The red-coloured building on

a rock plateau contains a silver chörten, supposed to be the reliquary chörten of the first Shingsa Pandita. High above the monastery, at the cliff's foot, tiny hermitages are set up in between fallen boulders and debris, and underneath overhanging rocks. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, Ragya Gompa was reopened in 1980. Since then a large number of living quarters housing some 500 monks, eight residential buildings for lamas, five big and small temples have been rebuilt, and the main hall reconstructed.

Although substantially restored the Tsuglakhang did partially survive the iconoclast for it still shows some older paintings among its murals. Above the entrance, a tablet of the Qianlong era (1736-1795) names the hall Auspicious Temple (*mtshan legs gling*, Chin. *Jiaxiang Si*), written in Manchu, Chinese, and Tibetan. The outside wall facing the grand walled-in courtyard has old murals of Green and White Tara, Amitayus, Vijaya, and the Lion-headed Dakini to the left; on the right side are Manjushri in the centre, flanked by a four-armed Avalokiteshvara to the left and Vajrapani to the right side, and above them four different forms of Manjushri. On both sides of the vestibule we can see the ubiquitous Four Lokapalas, Wheel of Life and Death, a painting of Gesar or Machen Pomra and a warrior-like god surrounded by similar deities. The inside of the main hall is decorated with pillar carpets and a set of thangkas, and exquisitely painted Rebgong murals. The visitor may not be able to see all of them as many are covered completely with woven cloth. They depict Shakyamuni's life story and the most common Gelugpa deities, such as Usnisasitatapatra, Hayagriva, Yamantaka and a superb Avalokiteshvara. The chapel at the back shows murals of Vairocana, Shakyamuni and Gelugpa lamas, while the altar has statues of Amitabha, the Buddhas of the Three Ages, and Aksobhya. Very well made bronze images of Green Tara and Tsongkhapa are placed on the lap of the central Shakyamuni image.

Even though there are still quite a number of ruins visible, the very large extent of the lamasery can be seen clearly. The provisioning of such an institution and its large monk populace must formerly have been quite a challenge, and there was a certain need for trade to furnish enough food, tea and other commodities. Today, the main road in front of Ragya Gompa has again become busy with trading monks, thus reminding us of the former importance of this

trading-post. Tea and barley, cloth, cheese, salt and sugar, jujubes, iron pans, once were bartered here for wool and musk. Looking into the stores' shelves and at the goods they offer, it seems that the basic needs of the monastery's residents has not changed much, yet are complemented by globalized goods like candies, beer, film rolls, and devotional objects such as tshatsha models. This recalls Rock's description²⁰ of the single-known record of a monk 'printing' holy Buddha images onto the water surface of the passing river—for acquiring merit.

Besides accomplishing meritorious deeds the monks also have to observe rituals and ceremonies that keep their local protector, the mountain god Amnye Chungngön, well-disposed; a festival for the Blue Garuda²¹ has to be held on the eleventh day of the fourth month. Led by their head-lama the monks of Ragya Gompa climb up the steep slopes of the mountain to burn offerings on top of the ridge. At a height of about 3570 m the holy site is marked by a lhatse full of prayer-flags. From there the view extends across the Yellow River into the heartland of the Ngoloks and across the ridges of the Amnye Machen mountain range.

4.3. Tsanggar Monastery

The other significant Gelugpa monastery of the region, Tsanggar Gompa,²² is located at 3360 m above sea level and about 25 km to the east, as the crow flies, and some 70 km by car. To reach it from Ragya however, one has to follow the main road back toward Guide, pass the roadside village Hebei xiang (approx. 20 km), cross the beautiful gorges of the Big and Small Gold Valleys (Serchen and Serchung Nang) and leave the main highway some 22-23 km after Hebei (near the 315-km milestone). A rough motorable track will eventually lead to Tsanggar Monastery (26 km), if the right-turn from the route leading to Arig Sogwo county (Chin. *Henan Xian*) is not missed. About half-way the Tsanggar trail crosses a pass amidst beautiful and—in summer—green hills. Although the area belongs to Tibetan Hainan Prefecture, it is part of the historic Sogwo-Arig region centred around Henan county of Huangnan Prefecture. As the latter's relations to Ragya Gompa and thus with the northern tribes of the Ngolok are substantial, we consider the Arig region (see next section) and Tsanggar within this chapter on the Amnye Machen mountains, which can be seen from Tsanggar as well.

The lamasery of Tsanggar Döndrub Rabten Ling (*gTsang sgar don drub rab brtan gling*, Chin. *Shizang Si* or *Zang Si*) was established in 1765 by the first Lama Tsang Pandita Tenpa Gyatsho (*bstan pa rgya mtsho*, 1737-1780). Founded four years earlier than Ragya Gompa, Tsanggar somehow symbolizes the Gelugpa's careful approach towards Mt. Amnye Machen and the Ngolok region. In the *Political and Religious History of Amdo* it is explicitly documented that when in 1779 the 6th Panchen Lama on his way to Beijing stayed in Kumbum he asked the first Tsang Lama to spread his teachings among the Ngoloks.²³

Tenpa Gyatsho was a native of the neighbouring Arig region, yet supposed to be the reincarnation of the eminent Sera monk Tsangge. During his early years he lived in Rebong's Rongwo Gönchen and later went to Sera Monastery, where he enrolled at Jeba College. In 1762, during the ceremonies of Lhasa's Mönlam Festival, he attained the renowned title of a geshe lharampa.²⁴ When he returned home to Amdo three years later, he gained the support of the Khoshot-Mongol prince Wangden Dorje Palanmu* who reigned over the Arig region. Together with his younger brother Lobsang Tendzin Gyatsho, called the Kakor Tulku, Tenpa Gyatsho started the construction of Tsanggar Gompa in 1765. Right from the start he established an exoteric college wherein Sera teaching materials were used.

When in 1779 Tenpa Gyatsho met the 6th Panchen Lama in Kumbum, the latter honoured him with the title of the 'Great Pandita who is proficient in the five sciences' and Tsanggar Gompa became a branch of Tashilhünpo.²⁵ That started the lamasery's fame, and its voice was heard all over Amdo. The monastic complex was continuously enlarged so that the number of its monks rose to more than a thousand. During Rock's visit, 15 incarnate lamas and 500 monks were looking after three chanting or temple halls. At his time the ruling 5th Tsanggar Pandita was the brother of the lamasery's steward.²⁶

In 1941 Tsanggar was ransacked by the looting army of the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang, and the monks were exiled to southern Gansu (northeastern rim of the Tibetan Plateau). Reconstruction of Tsanggar Monastery could start anew only after the communist take-over, and by 1953 there were again 16 tulku and 480 monks. Besides a greater and a lesser sutra hall it consisted of three temples, the printing establishment and 16 lama residencies, a

huge number of monks' quarters and the three study faculties of Tantra, Kalacakra and Medicine. Within five years, the number of monks grew by 20 per cent, and there were 25-30 tulkuas at the lamasery before its main buildings were again destroyed in 1958. The occupants of the 3 hectare complex were sent home to live with their families. A reopening in 1962 did not include rebuilding; this started in 1981 and until now has brought back a monastic population of about 560, with four tulkuas among them.

The Great Chanting Hall and a lesser dukhang were reconstructed as well as two temples, four colleges (Tshennyi, Gyüpa, Düñkhor and Menba Dratshang) and some residential buildings for the highest lamas, like the one to the left of the main assembly hall. They are fitted in between the ordinary living quarters, thus giving the monastery the appearance of a compact city spread across a rocky protrusion and the surrounding slope. The gompa seems enthroned above the river flowing through the gorge towards the Yellow River canyon.

The Great Chanting Hall burned in 1990, but was restored by 1996, though inside the main hall there were as yet no statues, only murals. The back chapel was about to get six large Buddha or bodhisattva images of 2.5-3 m height, set besides the centrally installed reliquary stupa of Lama Lakha Serthri (*la kha gser khri*).

Behind the Great Chanting Hall is a smaller temple called Damdengkhang Jokhang. This structure is said to be the oldest one and supposed to date back to 1760 (or 1765). Although murals, probably Rebgong paintings on canvas, were missing in 1996, the coloured decorations on the old wooden beams and panels looked as though they might be the original ones. The central images inside are difficult to make out for they are almost completely covered by cloth and khatags. The wall at the back is covered by many smaller Maitreya-statues, while on both sides of the main images and along the side walls there are somewhat older thangkas. Among these we should pay regard to a beautiful Avalokiteshvara, hanging from a pillar to the right, and an appliqué-thangka of Tsongkhapa on the opposite side.

Some frames holding paintings, which probably were secured during former demolitions, were leaning against the walls: Green Tara, Vajrapani, and Hayagriva—the latter having the famous image in Sera as prototype—is behind a cloth curtain which

may not be lifted. The two main statues on the altar are both images of Jowo Shakyamuni. The crown of the left one shows the Five Dhyani Buddhas, while that on the right one is beautifully ornate with jewels. To the sides are figures of the Eight Mahasattvas, while to the right of the main altar we find two chörten, one of them made of copper plates. Behind it there are murals depicting a simple Mt. Meru and Amitabha in his Western Paradise.

To the right of the Jokhang we can find Jigpa Dratshang College which is well fitted with paintings portraying Shakyamuni, four-armed Lokeshvara, Yama, and others. In a small side-room on the upper floor, a deity wearing the typical hat of an oracle-protector, riding a mule, is totally veiled. This may be the local protector deity, the mountain god of Tsanggar Lamasery, Gochen (*sgo chen*). It is named after the impressive opening of the Dogen (*do rgen*) valley into the Ma Chu.

At the top end of the monastery rises a building with a green-tiled Chinese-style roof. It is the temple hall of Kangsar Rimpoche's residence, a tall structure with glass shrines of 4-5 m height inside. The central image is a large Tsongkhapa with his two main disciples. Inside the shrines are countless rows of smaller Tsongkhapa figures, said to amount to a thousand, while in the bottom-row statues of dakinis, Vajrapani, different Buddhas and dharmapalas (Hayagriva) can be seen. Entering the hall, the murals on the inner wall start with Shakyamuni and his disciples to the right, and Amitabha residing in his paradise of Sukhavati to the left. Following are images of Hayagriva, Yamantaka, Kalacakra, Hevajra, Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja, Manjushri, Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara, Aksobhya, Manjushri, and Vijaya.

Monks in Tsanggar Gompa are both Tibetans and Mongols, the latter from Sogwo Arig to the east. Thus, this important monastery acted as mediator between the various Ngolok tribes in the south, the Sogwo Mongols to the east and Rebgong Tibetans to the north. The development of this monastic institution, having all the four major study faculties, extended its influence over all of central and northern Amdo. Some of its incarnate lamas were active even outside Tibet, like the Dalai Khutuktu who also went to teach in Mongolia. In modern times, the resident monks regained responsibility for the local population, and they opened a school and a medical clinic for the villagers.

4.4. Sogwo Arig - Mongols in the Ma Chu bend

To the northeast of Ngolok Prefecture and encompassing the southernmost part of Tibetan Huangnan Prefecture (Rongwo region) is the latter's most sparsely populated county of Henan, also known as Arig region.²⁷ Its other Tibetan name of *Sogwo* simply means 'Mongolian', and thus hints at the circumstance that up to today about 88 % of this county's population is made up of Mongolian families. As a true enclave within an entirely Amdo-Tibetan surrounding, it is not at all surprising that these Mongolians are so thoroughly integrated with the Amdowa culture that only a few distinctive cultural traits remain. Most obvious though is the use of the yurt, the round felt tent built up on a folding trellis, while dress and trinkets of Sogwo nomads do not differ much more from their neighbours than variations among Tibetan tribes themselves. Especially in the northwestern part of Sogwo, cultural assimilation has gone so far that even the Mongolian language is lost.

Historically, this area and its neighbourhood were long influenced predominantly by Mongolian tribes rather than by Tibetans, and controlled by the Khoshot-Mongol prince Chahan Danjin of the Mongol banner²⁸ south of the Yellow River (Chin. [Huang] He nan). Although not belonging to Ngolok Prefecture the area has close connections to it, especially through Raga Gompa. Following the invitation of Gelugpa-supporting prince Chahan Danjin in 1709, Jamyang Shepa founded the famous Labrang Lamasery. Due to the latter's influence and importance and through the mediation of the Sogwo Arig tribes, Tsanggar and Raga monasteries were subsequently established in 1765 and 1769 respectively, thus furthering the Gelugpa's approach towards the Nyingmapa-dominated Ngoloks. Accordingly, Sogwo Arig's four lamaseries—Lakha Gön, Serlung Gompa, Chögar Gön, and Shingsa Gön—all belong to the Yellow Hats, and all are subordinate to powerful Labrang Tashi Chil. However, none of these were established as solid-structured domiciled monastery before the 20th century, when between 1924 and 1941 the former tent camps were turned into adobe building complexes.

4.4.1. Lakha Gön

Lakha Gön (*la' kha dgon dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling*) is most easily reached as it lies just some two kilometres east of the small Henan county town (Youganning). Nestled in between the slopes

of neighbouring hills, it faces south overlooking the Ze Chu plain. In the first half of the 18th century, the Mongol prince Dargye (*dar rgyas*) asked the Dalai Lama to come to his homeland in order to spread the Gelugpa Doctrine. The Dalai Lama sent one of his disciples from central Tibet, accompanied by a lama called Kan Lakha Drichen, to Sogwo Arig. He subsequently stayed in the prince's residence, and his reincarnation was bestowed with the title of Dalai Khutuktu. This incarnation line was involved in monastic building in Labrang and Tsanggar monasteries, before the 5th Lakha Rimpoche Lobsang Sönam Gyatsho (1846-1926), with the consent of the 9th Panchen Lama, in 1924 initiated the building of a monastery here, thus being affiliated to the teachings of the Panchen. When his successor, the 6th Lakha Rimpoche (1926-1969), became vice-magistrate of the autonomous Mongol Henan county in 1954, the monastery's assembly hall was enlarged to a dukhang of 80 pillars. Three years later it was demolished together with another temple structure (probably part of the monastery's Tantric college) and five tulku residencies, and the 70 monks were sent away.

Since its reopening in 1980, the sutra hall was rebuilt, and about 100 monks are taking care of it. Some relics of the original gompa are said to have survived the iconoclast of the Cultural Revolution, namely a 35-cm-high Buddha statue of massive gold and a Bronze image of Tara, besides a gold- and silver-covered Kadampa-chörten.²⁹

4.4.2. Serlung Gompa

Serlung Gompa or Datshen Gön (*Dacan Si* in Chinese, *mda' tshan dgon bkra shis dga' ldan gling*) lies 61 km southeast of Henan county seat in the village of Serlung. Accordingly it is known as Serlung Gompa. The early tent camp monastery was established in 1924 under guidance of a Labrang lama. Within three decades it grew to a size of more than five hectares, and having 180 monks looking after its sutra hall and studying in an exoteric college (Tshennyi Dratshang), it became one of Sogwo Arig's four lamaseries.³⁰

4.4.3. Chögar Gön

Chögar Gön (*chos sgar bkra shis chos rdzong*) is called *Quge Si* in Chinese. This monastery is located in Ningmute village, 31 km southwest of Henan county town. It developed at the former Mongol prince's residence and the banner's administrative and trade centre, of which the remains are found at

a short distance. As the Mongol prince lost political control over Labrang Tashi Chil when the 5th Jamyang Shepa was in charge, he wanted to have a bigger lamasery near his political heartland. Thus in 1937 he first established a tent camp of eight monks that was enlarged, using adobe, in 1941. Six years later, three residential buildings and some plain living quarters for ordinary monks were added. But in 1948 Labrang Monastery regained its influence, and starting from 1954 the monastic administration of Chögar Gön was back in the hands of a Labrang lama. By 1958, a complex with dukhang and 400 monks had developed on an area of 10 hectare. The same year it was destroyed, but thirty years later it is again rebuilt, inhabited by about one hundred monks.³¹

4.4.4. Shingsa Gön

Shingsa Gön (*shing bza' dgon nam stag lung dgon bkra shis bde legs 'khyil*), or *Xiangzha Si* in Chinese, sits on the northern bank of the Ma Chu, 75 km south of Henan. Dating from 1905 it is Sogwo Arig's earliest foundation (tent monastery), and again under Labrang Tashi Chil's guidance was turned into a domiciled lamasery by 1930. The 108 monks of the pre-1958 era had to look after three temple halls and four tulku residencies. Demolished in 1958, we can now find an assembly hall, a Maitreya Temple and one lama residence within the reconstructed monastic complex.³²

4.5. Yarmothang and Bayankara Mountains: Monasteries

It seems that the region between central Amdo and northern Kham belongs to the least known regions of Tibetan populated areas. Looking at the map of ethnic distribution and history of Tibetan civilization,³³ we find the respective space marked by the name of Yarmothang (*g.yar mo thang*).³⁴ It means the vast highlands of Yarmothang designating the eastern expanses of the inner Tibetan Plateau's highland of steppes—the latter being better known by the toponym Changthang ('Northern Plains'). As *yar* means 'upper, upwards', Yarmothang indicates the 'upper plains' or the 'plains reaching upwards', i.e. the grasslands around the uppermost reaches of the Ma Chu. These parts of the plateau lie between 4400 and over 5,000 m above sea level, and therefore are hardly populated even by nomads. Administratively it forms mainly part of today's Matö (*rma stod*) county (Chin. *Madoi Xian*)³⁵ of Ngolok

Prefecture. It is a county of more than 25,000 km² and a population of less than 10,000 people,³⁶ and hence it belongs to the least populated stretches of the world.

The above-mentioned map has Yarmothang stretching as far east as the easternmost tip of the Ma Chu bend, which cannot be considered correct because this land is covered by the Amnye Machen mountain ranges. There are more plains further south, though, and these hardly-known regions again belong to Ngolok Prefecture. That is why we also include some of the important monasteries and temples of the eastern and southern part of the prefecture in this chapter. Although not belonging to the Amnye Machen mountains, they are within the realm of the Ngoloks and may be seen as part of the far ranging, height-wise unimpressive Bayankara mountain ranges. In the western part of the prefecture the Ngoloks depend more or less totally on pastoral economy, while the tribes in the eastern county of Pema carry on some agriculture.

4.5.1. In the Grasslands of the Yarmothang

Tshowar Karche Dokha

With hardly any population across vast stretches of grassland it is easy to understand that monastic institutions in the Yarmothang did not develop until late. As in other pastoral areas of Amdo, nomads were served for a long time by mobile tent camp monasteries, with many of them being turned into domiciled monastic complexes, including adobe or brick structures, not earlier than during the 20th century. In the Yarmothang we even have one of the latest examples of building a temple: *Tshowar Karche Dokha* (*mtsho bar dkar rche'i rdo kha*, Chin. Cuowa kashici duoke Si).

Originally being a simple shrine for a few nomads who come in summer to use the grasslands surrounding the two lakes of Tsho Ngoring and Tsho Gyaring³⁷ and the marshes near the Yellow River's sources, *Tshowar Karche Dokha* is to be reached from Matö county town on a road (90 to 100 km) consisting of countless pot-holes of various sizes, leading westward to the northern tip of Lake Ngoring, and following a reasonable track along its western shore. Where the small mountain of *Tshowarkarche* (4610 m) overlooks the stretch of land separating the two lakes from each other, there is a small peninsula at its foot with the temple shrine on it. Formerly monks came here in summer only, putting up

their tents and reading sutras for the herdsmen of the area. From 1980 onwards, people have begun to construct several buildings. The site consists of a small temple hall, a manikhang containing a four-metre-high prayer-wheel and a long row of chörten. In addition there are some large mendong (mani-walls) and lots of prayer-flags. Although it is obviously a Buddhist site, it seems to be visited by Bön believers as in 1996 one of the mani-walls even carried a flagstone bearing a Bön-mantra.

The site's importance originally came from Tshowarkarche, which is considered as a holy mountain of the local pastoralists. In 1956 the site was just a stone heap, but its importance was stressed after the visit of an eminent monk called Mani Lama. Mani Lama's remains were kept here underneath a *dokha*, he having died suddenly following the visit. After the destruction of the *dokha* in 1958, people started to build small temple halls at the very place where two monks now are permanently in service. At times there may be more than 40 monks, mostly belonging to the Nyingmapa order, while some Gelugpa come here as well. Inside the main chapel are two precious reliquary chörten of 1.2 m height, containing the remains of Mani Lama and the local Bönpo Sang Hong whom he met here in 1956.

Horkor Gön

The oldest monastic institution of the Matö grasslands is **Horkor Gön** (*hor skor dgon bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling*), called *Huoke Si* in Chinese. This lamasery can be reached from Matö by driving southwestward on the main road leading to Yushu. After 70 km there is an eastward turn-off into the Hei He river plain. A difficult track across swampy marshlands ends after 30 km in Huanghe village with Horkor Monastery on the opposite side of the Yellow River and still at a distance of some 40 km. Horkor Gön came into being in 1927, when Lama Thubten Chögye of Kham's Dzogchen Monastery came here to teach. Subsequently the monks, who until then had been living among their tribesmen, gathered in a tent camp monastery and soon afterwards they built the first adobe structures in a place called Baimana on the eastern bank of the Ma Chu. 177 monks and five tulku lived here before 1958, and by then owned four permanent lama residencies and 36 tents. The assembly hall consisted of eight large tents joined together. It is said to have accommodated 300 people for prayers. The lamasery's reopening in 1981 saw

the subsequent construction of a dukhang built of wood and bricks, a meditation hall, two manikhang, one residential building, and 30 monk-quarters.³⁸

Driving from Matö's Huashixia in a southeastern direction we pass by a spot from where the impressive central massif of Mount Machen Kangri can be seen. This is a place of worship, marked by a small altar, a darchen full of multi-coloured prayer-flags and often hosting the tent-camp of monks belonging to Tsogyenrawa's little monastery. This is one of the most impressive sceneries in Ngolok Prefecture, comparable only to the panorama along the regular parikrama (circumambulation path). About 150 km further on the two counties of Gande and Darlag can be reached, nestled in between the foothills of both mountain ranges: Amnye Machen to the north and Bayankara to the south. It is here that the Ma Chu flows through the gap between the barrier constituted by the two mountain massifs.

4.5.2. The realm of the Bayankara Mountains

Compared to the ice-capped peaks of Amnye Machen the Bayankara ranges are relatively low. Their highest elevations barely reach above 5200 m and thus in summer they fit perfectly into the green grasslands of the surrounding plateau. This nomadic country was for long 'untouched' by temples and monasteries, and religious services were mostly delivered by monks living among their tribes' households or, starting about the turn of the 20th century, constituting monastic tent camps. Within the pastoral realm of Gande, Darlag and Cigdril counties the number of lamaseries hardly surpasses the one of the single Pema county, where the oldest monasteries of Ngolok Prefecture are to be found. As mentioned already, the overwhelming majority adhere to the old Nyingmapa order. To the northeast, the few Gelugpa monasteries can be found in the direction of Labrang's sphere of influence, while to the southeast one approaches the last remaining area where the Jonangpa are to be found.³⁹ Being almost inaccessible to any foreigner until the mid-1990s, this region's Buddhist realm may belong to the most challenging still to be investigated in the entire Tibetan Plateau.

4.5.3. Gande County (dGa' bde)

Lungngön Thubten Chökhor Ling

Lungngön Monastery (*va shul bla ma'i chos sgar ram lung sngon dgon thub bstan chos 'khor gling*),⁴⁰ *Long'en Si* in Chinese, is reached on a dirt road from

Gande county town going 45 km southeastward alongside the Ma Chu tributary Ke Chu. Already around the end of the 19th century Dongcha Lama of Dzogchen Monastery in Kham came here to spread the Doctrine, and henceforth the tradition was kept unbroken, though a monastery was not established until 1958. The tent camp of that time started to develop into the area's largest Nyingmapa lamasery after the 1985 reopening, now covering a space of more than 13 hectares of land, with a two-storeyed dukhang, a lesser assembly hall, three residential complexes and quarters for 300 monks (by 1996). The highest incarnation, Pema Chenbu, lives in the USA, but visits his home-monastery regularly.

The core of Lungngön Gompa may be seen in the large white chörten containing at least one chapel.⁴¹ Towards the river's bank long corridors contain countless prayer-wheels for the pilgrims' circumambulations. The two red-coloured assembly halls are located in the central part of the monastery. The bigger one is called Great Palace (*Dechen Phodrang*) and contains beautifully painted, but mostly cloth-covered murals. The outer walls around the entrance of the dukhang depict mythical landscapes, protector deities and other common motifs. To the right Mt. Meru, Gesar, a bhavacakra and an illustration of the monks' rules are to be seen, while to the left are the Kingdom of Shambhala, Green Tara and protectors, finally the 'Five Sisters of Luck' with Tashi Tsheringma among them.

Around the enormous space of the temple hall's interior, the murals show the Lokapalas on both sides of the door; going clock-wise: Kubera in his dharmapala-form (in *Yab Yum* position), Usnisa-sitasitapatra; on the sidewall: Rahu, a winged Yama, and other winged Nyingmapa deities. Following are Manjushri, Lokeshvara, Vajrasattva, Tsongkhapa, and Shakyamuni. Two thangkas depict a winged Yama and a Vajrapani. Main images of the altar's back wall are the bodhisattva triad (Vajrapani, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri), Aksobhya, Medicine Buddha, Padmasambhava, and Shakyamuni. Next there are some well preserved old bronze statues on the big stupa. The central images of worship are a 4-5 m high statue of Shakyamuni and a slightly smaller Jowo to his right. On the opposite side we have a similar-sized Padmasambhava. A big number of smaller statues, mostly new, are found at their feet and on the right side of the altar. The canvas

murals on the right side of the dukhang portray Padmasambhava, Amitabha, a thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara, Maitreya, some representative Nyingmapa protectors and finally the Medicine Buddha.

The lesser assembly hall, *Dukhor Gompa*, stands to Dechen Phodrang's right side. Built in 1996, it then contained little more than books and the central images of Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, Maitreya and some bodhisattva statues. Outside the entrance several portraits of Tashi Tsheringma dominate the Four Lokapalas and the rich decorations. Towards the river, a relatively small *Dzogchen Lhakhang* reminds of the monastery's affiliation to Dzogchen Gompa in Sichuan. Besides the paintings of the customary deities on the side-walls (Shakyamuni, Amitabha, Vajrasattva), there are some bronze statues and older thangkas.

On the way back to Gande county seat, after only a few kilometres, Lungkyia Monastery (*lung skyadgon pa*) can be seen on the southern bank of the river. It dates back less than a century, but belongs to the Jonangpa tradition that for long was believed to be extinct.⁴² The interesting Donggyü Dokha Monastery, situated to the southwest of Gande county town, is a mixed Nyingmapa and Gelugpa institution, mentioned already in the preceding chapter.⁴³

4.5.4. Darlag County

Thraling Gön

Thraling Gön or Thubten Shedrub Norbu Gatsel Tashi Denling (*thub bstan bshad sgrub nor bu'i dga' tsal bkra shis ldan gling*),⁴⁴ *Chalang Si* in Chinese, lies 20 km to the west of Gyume township, Darlag county's centre. The site of Thraling Gön is dominated by the huge prayer-flagged funeral ground for sky burials some hundred metres above on the hill.⁴⁵ This large Nyingmapa monastery was founded in 1895 as a branch of Kathog Gompa in Peyül, Kham. The tent camp of the early days was substituted by adobe structures starting from 1913. Until 1958, it had developed into a monastic community of up to 270 members, with 93 long-term resident monks and ten tulku. In the meanwhile, it has grown again to a number of more than 100 residents among the 300 monks, and the monastery considers itself as home of 50 incarnate lamas. The new dukhang is partially built with cement and was bare of murals in 1996. The posterior altar is

exquisitely adorned with beautiful wood carvings and main images made of gilded bronze. Centrally located is a reliquary stupa flanked by a Shakyamuni and a Padmasambhava statue. Some old thangkas represent the Eight Manifestations of Padmasambhava. The carved wooden shrine contains four older bronze statues.

4.5.5. Cigdril County (gcig sgril)

Peyül Monastery

Peyül Darthang Ling (*dpal yul dar thang mdo sngags bshad sgrub gling*),⁴⁶ *Baiyu Si* in Chinese, is the fastest developing Nyingmapa monastery in the Ngolok grasslands. Belonging to the easternmost county of Cigdril, it is 150 km distant from the county's seat of Drugchen Sumdo. Coming from Machen or Gande one arrives at the bifurcation where the Pema (Chin. *Baima*) road branches off from the main road to Cigdril. Taking the latter the Mar Chu river is crossed after 25 km. A side-track follows the river downstream for a further 18 km until the huge monastic area of Peyül Gompa is reached.

The history of the monastery dates back to 1857 when Gyatrül Lama of Peyül Monastery in Kham, Pema Dongak Tenzin (1830–1891), came here for the first time to propagate the Buddhist Doctrine. Residing in a tent camp at the beginning, the monks built the first adobe structures in 1882, and thereafter the monastery started to grow rapidly. Inspecting its size in 1996 it appears to have become by then the largest monastery in Qinghai, despite the two devastations of 1958 and the Cultural Revolution. It now occupies an area of more than 60 hectares.⁴⁷ With 400 to 500 resident monks, the 1958 permanent number of 710 has not been achieved yet, but seasonally Peyül Gompa houses more than a thousand monks. There are 15 tulku, with the head-lama living in Nepal and another eminent tulku in the USA. An extra guesthouse has been built for the latter's reception.

Arriving at Peyül Darthang Ling, one is immediately greeted by the impressive structure to the left of the road: a big white chörten of about 20 m height and in the shape of typical Yuan dynasty stupas. Behind it, on the slope, one can see the traces of the Lingkor, the holy path leading around the monastic complex and dotted with several manikhang. The largest among them contains a huge, three-metre-

high prayer-wheel of gilded bronze, and beautiful new paintings of the Four Lokapalas, of Shakyamuni, Manjushri, Lokeshvara, Padmasambhava, Maitreya, and Green Tara.

The central complex of Peyül Darthang Monastery follows soon after the big chörten: an ensemble of a large and a smaller assembly hall with a stupa temple in between. The length of the Great Assembly Hall (Tshogchen Lhakhang) measures at least 50 m. It is decorated by sumptuous Rebgong art murals, with portrayal of the ubiquitous lokapalas, bhavacakra, Shambhala and the mountain deity Machen Pomra in the vestibule. The paintings on the walls inside depict the most important and common deities of the Nyingmapa pantheon, differing considerably from the Gelugpa's. Besides the widespread Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, Amitayus, Amitabha, four-armed Lokeshvara, Vajradhara, and Manjushri, it is the profusion of Nyingmapa protectors such as Herukas and Rahu, the Lion-headed Dakini Simhavaktra and mountain deities, who create the magic atmosphere in their temple buildings. Some typical Gelugpa figures—Tsongkhapa and Usnisasitatapatra—have also found their way into the Tshogchen Lhakhang's sacred space. The main images of the altar shrine are large in size. A Jowo Shakyamuni bronze of 5 to 6 m height in the centre, Maitreya to his left and Manjushri to his right, also in bronze and 2.5 m high, are accompanied by equally sized Amitabha, Aksobhya, Vajrasattva, and—a bit smaller—a gilded Padmasambhava, Green Tara, Shakyamuni, and several more bronze statues.

The Serdung Lhakhang, just completed in 1996, is similarly decorated with Rebgong murals, and contains three opulent huge reliquary stupas. The central one reaches to a height of 8 to 10 m and contains the remains of Shedra Rimpoche, the previous head lama of Peyül Darthang. The two chörten of 3 to 4 m height flanking it are dedicated to two former monastic preceptors of the lamasery. A beautiful statue of Shakyamuni and bronze images of two khempes should be noted, as well as the well executed wood carvings around the stupas, topped by two Garudas. The dukhang, a lesser assembly hall, again fitted with splendid Rebgong murals, is close by Serdung Lhakhang.

After the dukhang follows a lama residence and, at a distance, another complex called Shedra Lhakhang (*bshad grva lha khang*). It is the new college for

Buddhist studies, sponsored by Darthang Tulku who lives in the USA. Between the book shelves on the side walls of the main temple, Manjushri is kept as the main image. Some beautiful bronzes of Green Tara, Vajrasattva, Manjushri and Gesar deserve notice.

Near the top end of the extensive lamasery, further up the valley, we find two more temple structures, Phurba Lhakhang on the slope and Sangdog Pelri closer to the river side. Slightly curved very wide Chinese-style roofs distinguish Phurba Lhakhang, a temple dedicated to the meditation deity Vajrakila, here portrayed by a wooden central image. Murals depict Herukas, Menla, Shakyamuni, Amitabha and the most important bodhisattvas, Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara.

Near the valley bottom rises the three-storeyed Sangdog Pelri, a structure of Chinese architectural features and a mandala-like layout. This type of building is typical for the Ngolok region; in their dialect it is often pronounced Sangdag Hwaré. Due to its pagoda-like structure, it is also called Chörten Lhakhang, though its correct name is Sangdog Pelri Shingkō (*zang dog dpal ri'i zhing bkod*). Inside the temple three floors are fitted with statues and paintings of the Nyingmapa Buddhist pantheon, the artistic realization done by the Rebgong artist Kelsang and by artisans of bronze-work from Chamdo. The core of the ground floor is a mandala-like shrine in the centre of which Padmasambhava is enthroned. Other cast images portray his eight different manifestations,⁴⁸ while Rebgong clay statues depict his 25 disciples. The murals show an abundance of historically important persons such as Songtsen Gampo, and deities such as Vajrakila, Herukas, Rahu, Kubera. The bodhisattva triad of Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani being the main images of worship in Sangdog Pelri's middle storey, they are surrounded by exquisite paintings of the same triad, and of Usnisasitatapatra, Green Tara, Acala, Aksobhya, Vajrasattva, and Padmasambhava. On the uppermost floor, the central image is a statue of Amitabha and two attending bodhisattvas. Murals depict the adibuddha Samantabhadra to the right of the entrance, and Vajrasattva on the left.

The panorama from the top of Sangdog Pelri gives an impressive view of Peyül Darthang's extension. Further up the river, the valley climbs towards the southwestern slope of holy mount

Nyenpo Yutse (*gnyan po g.yu rtse*, 5369 m) which is considered to be the place of origin of the 'Three Ngolok Tribes'.⁴⁹ For this reason, it is also called Ngolok Mountain.

4.6. Pema - Home of the wild Ngolok tribes

At the southeastern tip of Qinghai we find the county of Pema (*pad ma*). Transcribed by Chin. *Baima*, it is written as *Banma* on Chinese maps, thus taking into account that the local Tibetan pronunciation is something like *Parma*.⁵⁰ Although located on the provincial border, it may be considered as the heartland of the surrounding Ngolok tribes, and as such there is a close relationship to neighbouring Serta and Dzamthang counties in Sichuan.

In the valley of the Mar Chu river, on a length of 50 to 60 km, not less than 45 sites of the Bronze Age were found,⁵¹ thus certifying early settlements within the Tibetan Plateau. According to historical records Tibetan farmers came here some 900 years ago and opened up land for agriculture. Only three centuries later, the population had grown so much that some people had to become herdsmen, and gradually took possession of the vast grasslands in today's Ngolok Prefecture.⁵² It was the era when Buddhism started to spread among the Ngolok tribes (15th century), and this early period is marked by activities of Nyingmapa teachers. More than a hundred years later, monks of the Kagyüpa and Jonangpa orders found their way into the Ngoloks' country, with the late coming Gelugpas not following until the mid-18th century.⁵³

Pema county is different from the rest of the prefecture, not only because it owns some considerable expanse of forests in the southern valleys cutting into the highland steppes, but also for its cultural background. While most of the areas in Ngolok land were without monastic institutions until the 19th and even 20th centuries, Pema's lamaseries date back as far as 1493. The architectural features of the 23 monasteries are often extraordinary, and the big number of stupas of different shapes and size makes the valley of Pema a country of chörten. Long rows of these reliquary stupas and places of worship line roads and monasteries, seemingly numbering several hundreds, if not thousands, within the county bounds. Simply rebuilding and repairing the older sites does not satisfy the locals until they have set up new records. In 1996 a completely new monu-

mental stupa was about half way to completion, probably exceeding 50 or 60 m in height. This huge structure at the lower end of Pema county seat, Selitang, is certainly the largest chörten all over the Tibetan Plateau, a single example of many more in the valley.

4.6.1. Dogongma Gompa

Dogongma Gompa (*mdo gong ma dgon pa*),⁵⁴ *Duogongma Si* in Chinese, is located at the confluence of the Mar Chu and a tributary, about 35 km before reaching Pema county seat when coming from Xining or Machen. Founded in 1860 this Nyingmapa monastery does not belong to Pema's early sites, yet there are striking architectural features that will stop any visitor on his way to Pema. The 40 to 50 monks—with four or five tulku among them—belong to the guru line of Kham's Kathog Gompa.

The complex starts from the roadside and the bridge overlooking the small river coming from the west. A bigger stupa is lined by three-storeyed smaller ones. They are of a cubic form that hints at their former origin in the old spirit-shrines called lhatho. Besides there are two manikhang in the shape of such chörten, with prayer-wheel galleries along the outer walls. Beautiful paintings of Amitayus and Vajrasattva are to be seen in one of the manikhang. From between these different structures, a tower-like building of nine storeys rises high above them. Local monks call it *Sölmkha*. Reminiscent of the famous Tower of Milarepa,⁵⁵ no connection to the holy Tibetan mystic and poet could be verified in a 1996 stop-over visit.⁵⁶

The main assembly hall of the little monastery exhibits attractive murals (in clockwise direction): Gesar, Shakyamuni, Medicine Buddha, Amitabha to the left, and different Buddhas, Heruka, Lokeshvara, Rahu, Padmasambhava, Ekajatri, and Begtse to the right. The Four Lokapalas are found inside, quite unusually, above the entrance. The central shrine of the dukhang has a statue of a 1,000-armed Avalokiteshvara.

4.6.2. Cagri Gompa

Cagri Gompa (*lcags ri dgon pa'am 'bros sgong dgonpa*),⁵⁷ *Jiangritang Si* in Chinese, was only built in 1937, but due to its extraordinary features should be seen among the most remarkable sites in Ngolok. It is easily reached from Pema county town by going southeast, located at the roadside about

two to three kilometres after the bridge across Mar Chu river. This complex was constructed under the guidance of Khempo Ngaga and Baizha* Lama of Kathog Monastery in Kham. Although *in situ* the name was articulated as Sangdag Hwaré (*sangs bdag dpa' ri*),⁵⁸ it is obvious that the architecture of Kathog's Sangdog Pelri Temple served as a model for Pema's and other similar temple buildings in Ngolok Prefecture.

While the unique architectural style has its prototype in the mixed Chinese and Tibetan structural forms used in Kathog, Pema's Cagri Monastery stands for a further development and a spatial extension of the same concept, both for the five-storeyed central building erected in the shape of a mandala, and the layout of the entire complex. Surrounded by a circle of about 100 stupas, an inner sacred sphere is distinguished from manikhangs and small assembly halls. The inner circle is further circumscribed by three ample mani-stone walls with the highest of them reaching up to three metres. The flagstones of those mendong bear holy scriptures as well as beautifully carved images of Buddhist deities (mainly four-armed Avalokiteshvara), protectors and eminent monks.⁵⁹ In the core of the enclosed circle rises a spherical hill, likewise surrounded by further rings of mani stones and parts of mendong. At first it seems to be intended to give the hillock the shape of the *bumpa* of a stupa. In that case the main building on its top would constitute the holy reliquary shrine, *harmika*, that ordinarily sits on the body of the bumpa. Thus both the whole complex and the structure on the hillock together form a huge chörten shaped out of the natural surroundings.

The palace-like temple building on the spherical hill occupies a square-shaped area, and the same square constitutes the ground floor of the pyramidal structure to which the name Sangdag Hwaré is actually related. At a first superficial glance, its architecture seems to be dominated by Chinese features, yet a detailed look at its mandala layout and structure evokes the impression of a certain resemblance to the star-like and terraced segmentation of the famous central Tibetan form of a kumbum-chörten.⁶⁰ The architectural arrangement in front of us seems to be an Amdo synthesis of the traditional Tibetan stupa-form (pattern) and Chinese pagoda-architecture (roof). The temple hall is constructed as an architecturally mixed building of wooden poles and

brick walls, covered by a curved, five-layered roof, surfaced by glazed tiles and decorated with Tibetan ornaments and symbols (Wheel of the Dharma, gyaltschen).

The structure of the Sangdag Hwaré obviously fulfils the general requirements of a kumbum chörten, i.e. it offers the pilgrim the possibility of visualizing—or better to have visualized—the sacred path that leads to enlightenment. As is described with the famous Gyantse Stupa,⁶¹ the Buddhist believer may experience the different stages of meditation by circumambulating the temple, its galleries and, step by step, all the floors up to its top level. The process of becoming conscious of the subsequent levels of perception and realization is expressed in the architectural layout. Hence by following the temple's layout the pilgrim aspires to attain the enlightenment—he is in a sense initiated in the light of the primordial Buddha. In this Nyingmapa temple it is the adibuddha Samantabhadra who is portrayed in a mural on the first floor. The circumambulation done out of devotion and the intention of acquiring merit (beneficial karma) is thus enriched by that which is acquired by walking clockwise along the meditational path represented by the Sangdag Hwaré, whereby the pilgrim is helped to become spiritually centred.

In 1996 it appeared that this approach was not being performed consistently. This may be due to the temple not yet being fully restored, among other reasons. In comparison to other Tibetan-Buddhist orders, the Nyingmapa may reveal a greater tendency to integrate, but in respect of iconography stress was definitely placed on equipping the temple with Nyingmapa representations of deities and lamas. However, the main images of the Gelugpa are also portrayed in the murals.⁶²

From outside the temple appears to be composed of five tiers, thus representing the five meditational (Dhyani) Buddhas. These tiers are—except the ground and top floors—further divided into three segments, and the inner structure of the building is similarly divided into three floors, the number three being a symbol for the central ideological concepts of Buddhism: either triratna—the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma (his teachings) and sangha (the Buddhist community)—or the three levels of Buddha-being, trikaya or ‘Three Bodies’.⁶³

The pilgrim’s path within the Sangdag Hwaré is to be started through the corridors with prayer-wheels

on the ground floor. Central images of the first storey are Padmasambhava, accompanied by his yoginis, and Shakyamuni. Furthermore, images of Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Vajrapani, the Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, and Heruka are to be seen. Paintings on the second floor depict Manjushri, Heruka, Padmasambhava, Green Tara, Padmasambhava, Aksobhya, and Usnisasitatapatra, while the main image of Avalokiteshvara is positioned in between two reliquary chörten. In front of it there are several smaller statues of Maitreya, Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, and Green Tara. Finally, the upper floor is dedicated to Shakyamuni, flanked by two bodhisattvas, with canvas paintings of 1,000 Buddhas, Avalokiteshvara, Shakyamuni, Amitayus, and the Medicine Buddha.

The skylight panels of the top floor have murals of Rahu as well as of Amitabha and Padmasambhava in their respective paradise-realms—Sukhavati and Sangdog Pelri, respectively—the latter’s giving its name to the architectural complex: Sangdog Pelri or ‘Glorious Copper Mountain Paradise’. The palace of this paradise, called the ‘Three-Buddha-Body Mansion’ is ultimately found to be represented by the Sangdag Hwaré Temple. As described in the canonical Nyingmapa texts *The Seven-chapter Prayer* and *Pemakathang*,⁶⁴ the palace is located on top of a mountain that rises from the centre of a continental sea. There

Padmasambhava, by his own essence or through his emanations, protects the beings of Jambudvipa from the harmful influences of the mKa’ ‘gros and the Srin pos; he remains there until the end of samsara,⁶⁵

and therefore

Padma Sambhava in various forms teaches the sutras, reveals the tantras, performs initiations, and explains the deeds that bind beings to evolution and those that set them free.⁶⁶

In the meanwhile it has become clear that Cagri Gompa both outlines the pattern of a kumbum chörten and provides an architectural draft of Sangdog Pelri paradise. According to Tibetan belief Guru Rimpoche (Skr. Padmasambhava), upon leaving the snowland (Tibet) retreated to a Pure Land called ‘Paradise of the Magnificent Copper Mountain’, Sangdog Pelri in Tibetan. It is imagined



Plate 5. Plan of Sangdog Pelri (thangka)

as located in the southwest of India within the realm of the rakshasa demons, weird cannibal creatures with dark skin. Their gruesome activities all around the locale guard it against any unwanted intruder. The rakshasas' domain is composed of a multitude of islands at the rim of the known world; hence, previous travellers to northeastern Tibet may well recall their hazardous venture, a journey to the formerly hostile country of the yak-herding Ngoloks, whose realm was for a long time like an island in an inaccessible part of Tibet. Here we may recall that the paradise of immortal Padmasambhava is said to be situated on an island called Chamara, 'Yak-tail Island', where he is supposed to reside in a three-storeyed palace and continue teaching his circle of followers.⁶⁷

The structural type of a Sangdag Hwaré Temple is well disseminated in the Ngolok realm as well as in some Nyingmapa monasteries of neighbouring Kham, like temples at Kathog and Peyül Gompas. The latter may have provided the prototype, built up of a combination of Chinese and Tibetan architectural features, yet Cagri Monastery can be taken as an example of a further development. This is particularly true for the spatial dimension, for it is no longer merely the representation of the immortal's palace building, but also an entire outline plan of the pure land. The latter is framed here by the 124 stupas⁶⁸ going around Cagri Gompa. Its inner sphere is surrounded by mani-walls, circumscribing a large meadow which may be regarded as a symbol for Muleting Lake—a large body of water extending into the heart of mythical Chamara Island. As with Padmasambhava's palace, towering above Sangdag Pelri mountain rising from Muleting Lake, Sangdag Hwaré Temple is enthroned on the central mound of Pema's Cagri Gompa.

At the temple's entrance to the prayer-wheel corridor several wooden panels display remains of some older paintings. This suggests that Cagri Gompa, or the Sangdag Hwaré, was not entirely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The conditions of some decorative parts—rain-water damage of murals, for instance—is evidence that the temple had been neglected for some time, thus gradually falling into decay. This process fortunately has been stopped and reversed by substantial repairs, and the structure as a whole reconstructed, including remains of the older 1937 building, thus preserving one of the most impressive Lamaist monuments of the early 20th century in Amdo.

4.6.3. Achonggya Monastery

Just by the roadside, about 12 km southeast of Pema county town, the historically oldest monastery of the whole Ngolok region is reached: Achonggya Gompa Dongag Shedrub Ling (*a skyong rgya dgon pa mdo sngags bshad sgrub gling*),⁶⁹ *Ashijiangjiagong Si* or *Yaritang Si*⁷⁰ in Chinese. According to tradition it was established in 1367 by Nyingmapa lama Trinle Namgyal.⁷¹ By the end of the 15th century apparently it had deteriorated or even been abandoned, as written records report a monastery foundation at this place in 1493, by the name of Drakar Gogön (*brag dkar mgo dgon*) adhering to the Kathog line of the Nyingmapa order. In 1716, when Achonggya Rimpoche called on the 32nd Tsangwa Lama Ngawang Tenzin Namgyal (1691–1738) to become abbot of the monastery, it was reconstituted as a lamasery of the Jonangpa order. That is when it was renamed Dongag Shedrub Ling.⁷² Therefore, Achonggya Gompa is the Ngolok's Jonangpa monastery with the longest history and one of the largest among them.

On the eve of the 1958 disruption, the monastic complex consisted of three assembly and temple halls, three monumental stupas and 31 housing buildings on an area of 0.4 ha. Since its reopening in 1980, 100 monks and four tulkuhs had returned to the site, by 1996, which saw the reconstruction of Lama Ngawang Tenzin's residence, a temple, an incomplete (in 1996) dukhang and three magnificent stupas of 30 m height, all of them fitted out with generally quite basic murals, thus representing a type of kumbum chörten. It is recorded that the latter were constructed during the monastery's enlargement in 1856 by Ngawang Gongque*. The first one is said to have been rebuilt about 1981, the second in 1989 and the last one in 1995. The architectural style of the stupas corresponds to a slightly elongated Tibetan type with the Buddha-eyes on the outer walls of the *harmika*. The layout of the base of two of them is square-shaped, while the oldest one has an octagonal ground-plan. The interior decoration was only partially finished by 1996, and the oldest among the chörten (the one closer to the river) exhibited the most interesting paintings. The chapels at the bottom mostly had bodhisattva images; a fixed pattern for the arrangement of deities was not yet evident.⁷³

In the newly rebuilt dukhang many of the fresh paintings are covered by cloth. They depict Mahakala, Padmasambhava, Green Tara, 1,000-

armed Avalokiteshvara, Amitayus, Phurba, Cakrasamvara, Kalacakra, and Hayagriva on the left-hand walls. The altar on the back-side of the assembly hall has an uninspiring new statue of a Jonangpa lama, Gönchen, and images of Avalokiteshvara, Amitabha, Padmasambhava and Shakyamuni. The latter, a statue of one metre high, is said to have been brought from India. A glass shrine contains a reliquary chörten with the ashes of Tulku Sanggye Dorje (deceased in 1984). Eighteen older bronzes mostly depict Green Tara. The walls past the altar display, on the right side, Amitabha residing in his Sukhavati paradise, Vairocana, Shakyamuni, Aksobhya and Menla. The front wall concludes with paintings of Shakyamuni, the realm of Shambhala and a mule-riding protector deity called Jachar. The skylight panels again portray Gönchen Lama, with different siddhis and Buddhist teachers at his sides. Two old thangkas portraying Shambhala and Lokeshvara are worth seeing.

A third hall is named *Serdongkhang* and is elaborately fitted out with murals, thangkas and opulent fabrics. The central glass shrine shelters a 3 m high stupa, being the reliquary chörten of Lama Shel Drupa. Murals show Hayagriva, Heruka, and Kalacakra; the latter tantra also plays a significant role among the Jonangpas.⁷⁴ Noteworthy are two thangkas of Amitabha and Avalokiteshvara in his form with eleven heads and a 1,000 arms. Besides, about a dozen old bronzes are kept in this temple building, with a Kadampa chörten and a gilded Tara among them.

4.6.4. Gyüde Gompa

Gyüde Gompa (*rgyud sde dgon pa*) is located in Jide village about 60 km to the southeast of Pema county town. Therefore it is called *Jide Si* in Chinese. Founded in about 1520, it is the only Kagyüpa monastery within the bounds of Ngolok

Prefecture. Before 1958 there were 55 monks and two temple halls, taken care of by two incarnate lamas. Rebuilding of monks' quarters, an assembly hall and a manikhang started in 1982, and two dozen monks were reported by 1990. Their library possesses an important abridged version of an old text on classical Tibetan grammar and language. The setting of the gompa at the foot of forested mountains presents a remarkable view, framed as it is by fields and village houses and the river in front of it still spanned by an iron-chain bridge.⁷⁵

4.6.5. Dodrubchen Monastery

Dodrubchen Gompa (*[rdo] grub chen dgon pa*) is reached from Pema on a side road leading south for about 90 km. The Chinese name, *Zhiqin Si*, is given according to its location in Zhiqin village; its religious name is Sangchen Ngödrub Pelbar Ling (*gsang chen dngos grub dpal 'bar gling*). According to local tradition, a tent camp monastery was founded here in 1527, later destroyed by fire during incursions of Mongolian troops. The domiciled monastic complex was established as a branch of Dege's Dzogchen Monastery (Kham) in 1880, its founder being the 2nd Dodrubchen Lama Jigme Phünthog Jungne. Most of the monks were of neighbouring Serthang's Yarlung Pemakö Lamasery (in today's Sichuan) and had fled the marauding army of the Nyarong princely chieftain Gönpo Namgyal, who overran central Kham. Before 1958, there were (seasonally) up to 400 monks and 13 tulkus in Dodrubchen Gompa, which owned a greater and a lesser assembly hall and a meditation hermitage. Today it has more than 70 monks looking after two temple buildings, and in Pema county it is of equal importance to Achonggya Monastery. Thubten Trinle Pelsangpo, the 4th and present Dodrubchen Lama, left here in 1957. He resides in Gangtok in Sikkim and is said to keep up correspondence with his home-lamasery.⁷⁶

5. Kokonor Region and Tsaidam Basin

On many maps of ‘Greater Tibet’ the name of Amdo appears within an area space which may be delineated as a greater Kokonor region, i.e. the sacred Kokonor Lake and the surrounding steppes and deserts of both Kokonor and Tsaidam Basins. This somehow hints at the central Tibetan perspective of ‘lower parts of the valleys where they merge into the plains’, which is how the Tibetan word *mdo* is explained. Taking this perspective, obviously every tract of the Tibetan periphery may be seen as *mdo*, which, on the other hand, is interpreted as a Tibetan province named Amdo. It seems, though, that at the beginning of the 20th century the joint term of *mdo khams*, here taken as a generic term for *Amdo* and *Kham*, was still limited to ‘the province of Tibet southeast of Kokonor’.¹ While Lama Tsenpo referred to the shores of the lake—most likely the northern regions of Arig and Pari—and to the southern grasslands belonging to Yarmothang, neither his *Geography of Tibet* nor Lama Dragönpa’s *Political and Religious History of Amdo* mentioned the Tsaidam Basin.² This is not surprising since the regions west of Lake Kokonor were almost empty land, then just inhabited by a few thousand Mongolian nomads on a surface equalling the size of the state of Pennsylvania in the USA.³

There would be reason enough to look at this part of the Tibetan Highland as a separate province in its own right, but following the contemporary scheme of a ‘Greater Amdo’, outlining it as comprising the northern and northeastern third of the plateau, we include Tsaidam within the present chapter. This is vindicated by the following circumstances:

1. The few existing Lamaist monasteries are all situated at the eastern fringe of Tsaidam and thus are pretty close to the Kokonor region.
2. The founding of those lamaseries usually was carried out in close connection to mother monasteries in central Amdo.⁴

3. The history of Amdo was interwoven, more than any other part of Tibet, with the political and military actions of Mongolian tribes in the Kokonor realm.

5.1. Chabcha and south Kokonor area

The grasslands south of Lake Kokonor, between Tsaidam Basin to the west and the Yellow River to the east,⁵ belong to the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Hainan (meaning ‘south [of Lake] Kokonor’, Tib. *Tsholho*). Local Tibetans are nomadic pastoralists of the Banak tribes who are traditionally in contact with their Mongolian neighbours to the west. Their most important monastic centre is located at Thösamling Monastery of Drakar Treldzong. Like most of the region’s lamaseries it is a late foundation (18th to 20th century), grown in size due to its location within one of the most important sacred sites of Amdo: Drakar Treldzong, the White Crag Monkey Fort, which is one of Amdo’s four main power-places.⁶ It is a mountain peak of 4930 m height, with forested slopes and abundant wildlife, and to the northeast cut by a canyon of the Ma Chu tributary Tohoba (10 km south of Xinghai). From Xining it can be reached either via the Guide-Machen Highway and a branch road crossing the Ma Chu Gorge in the east, or, more reliable, via Hainan Prefecture’s capital Chabcha (Chin. *Gonghe* county). 100 km south of Chabcha, a side-road branches off to Xinghai county’s seat of Tsigorthang (28 km), and from there it is more than 20 km to the realm of Drakar Treldzong.

5.1.1. Drakar Treldzong Thösamling

After a dozen kilometres the track becomes difficult, as it descends into the Tohoba Canyon. Some 30 km on the Gelugpa monastery Thösam Yönten Dargye-ling of Drakar Treldzong⁷ (*brag dkar sprel rdzong thos bsam yon tan dar rgyas gling*) is reached (Chin. *Saizong Si*).⁸ The monastic complex expands at the

foot and across the slope of a mountain with craggy peaks and vast surrounding grasslands. Traces of people circumambulating the mountain help to make out the *Lingkhor*'s path. The holy mountain is considered to have 18 sacred sites, one of these is the Gelugpa lamasery.

This large monastery has a rather short history. It was founded in 1923 by Rongwo Gönchen's 3rd Arutsang Lama (1888-1959) to fulfil his predecessor's last wish. At the beginning there was just a lama residence and several monks' quarters, but in 1927 a large extension was possible as the lama gained the support of local chiefs and Ngolok tribes, as well as chiefs from Kokonor, Qilian Mountains and other areas; then an assembly hall and a Manjushri Temple were built. In the early 1950s a larger dukhang with 100 pillars was constructed, as well as a gönkhang and a Maitreya Temple. Thus, within a period of only several decades, Thösamling Monastery developed into the largest lamasery in south Kokonor district and a Buddhist cultural centre for the entire region. By 1958, 18 stupas and 15 residential buildings were added and 28 tulku were among the 520 to 620 monks. Reconstruction works began in 1981 and brought the monastery back to its former extensive size, with the large assembly hall as the core of the complex.⁹

The dukhang is surrounded by a huge courtyard, to which a flight of steps leads up. To the left side of the courtyard rises a pagoda-like temple building. The length of the main assembly hall's outer walls is approximately 50 m. The vestibule is painted with a Wheel of Life and Death, the mountain deity Machen Pomra and the four Lokapalas. Inside we find good murals of the Gelugpa pantheon's main images: Pelden Lhamo, Mahakala, all the major bodhisattvas and Tantric yidams, various lamas, Menla (Bhaisajyaguru), Ratnasambhava, Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, Vairocana, the 35 confessional Buddhas, Usnishavijaya, Kubera and Vajrasadhu. The main altar shrine contains gilded images of Aksobhya, Amitayus, Shakyamuni, Tsongkhapa, and Aru Rimpoche. Near the centre, behind the lama's throne, there is Arutsang Rimpoche's reliquary stupa, made of silver, its upper part gilded, and inlaid with jewels or semi-precious stones.

The temple on the courtyard's left side, Jampe Lhakhang, is dedicated to Maitreya. The main im-

age is a puzzling 8 m high sitting Maitreya, his hands holding lotus flowers containing the typical attributes of Manjushri. Leaving the main courtyard on the Jampe Lhakhang's side, the protectors' temple may be approached and, at the foot of a row of rocks, the Aru Lama residence. Further up the mountain, hermitages can be seen in between the crags.

Thösamling Monastery in Drakar Treldzong is a spiritual as well as a ritual centre. The exoteric college established in 1929 is well-known and often visited by learned lamas from Drepung, Labrang, Kumbum, Rongwo and other famous lamaseries. They add to the local students' progress, while Thösamling offers various ritual activities for pilgrims and Buddhist believers of nearly the entire Amdo area. Lengthy sutra lectures are held four times a year. Two annually held monastic festivals including masks dances, and ceremonies at stones shrines (*obo, lhatho*) of indigenous deities, largely attract pilgrims. They, of course, also visit the sacred mountain's other sites, such as rock imprints of King Gesar's horse, a stone image of Avalokiteshvara, a passageway through the craggy mountains, hermitages and spots which are associated with Padmasambhava and Tsongkhapa.

5.1.2. Thege Dargyeling

On the way from Xinghai county to Hainan Prefecture's capital Gonghe-Chabcha, about 45 km ahead (south) of Gonghe, there is a small, but extremely well apportioned monastery. It lies at the roadside and is named after the nearby village of Thege, Thege Sangngag Dargyeling (*the ge gsang sngags dar rgyas gling*) which is Tiegai in Chinese (*Tiegai Si*).¹⁰ This little monastery of 33 Nyingmapa monks is an example of a contemporary foundation, as there was no lamasery prior to the 1984 construction of an assembly hall and a temple building. The rich decoration of the dukhang may be due to the monastery's possession of almost four hectares of forested land.

The Tibetan-style assembly hall, topped by a Chinese gabled and hipped roof, stands in the middle of a large courtyard. The murals of the inner walls are exquisitely painted and depict Padmasambhava, the adibuddha Samantabhadra, Amitabha, Shakyamuni, Padmasambhava, Aksobhya, Vairocana, Green Tara, and Usnishasitatapatra. Main image of the central shrine is Padmasambhava above whom, astonishingly, a picture of the 10th Panchen Lama is

placed. Another remarkable feature is the fact that two of the Lokapalas are painted high up on the skylight panels, accompanying Shakyamuni and 18 arhats.

5.1.3. Chamru Monastery

The historically important Gelugpa monastery Chamru Tashi Gephel Ling (*'khyam ru dgon bkra shis dge 'phel gling'*,¹¹ Chin. *Qianbulu Si*, lies 15 km to the west of Chabcha town (Gonghe county) near an abandoned military airport strip. The entire complex, housing about 100 monks and one tulku, faces east and is characterized by its large dukhang and smaller Chinese and Tibetan-style temples to its sides. Its establishment is closely related to the 3rd Jamyang Lama of Labrang who, upon his return from central Tibet in 1813, passed through the homeland of the Chamru tribe in southern Thrikha and instigated the founding of a lamasery. When the Chamru tribe in 1821 moved from its original pastoral grounds to the southern slopes of the mountain range on the south Kokonor rim, in what today is Guinan county, a tent camp monastery was established at today's site. A few years later, the first adobe buildings were constructed. By 1949 Chamru Gompa had grown to be the largest and most important Gelugpa institution of Chabcha area, with nine incarnate lamas among just 221 monks.¹²

By 1996, the dukhang or main assembly hall was already fitted with Rebgong murals: the ubiquitous bhavacakra and Lokapalas in the vestibule, and, on the inner walls of the temple hall, the commonly seen deities that prevail with the Gelugpa—Tsongkhapa, Shakyamuni, Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, Usnisasitasitatapatra, as well as Atisha, Vairocana, Akshobhya, Green Tara, Menla.

The side-hall to the right of the dukhang is the Manjushri Temple (*Jampeyang Lhakhang*). Though bearing Tibetan features, Chinese stylistic elements prevail, most obviously in the roof architecture (two-layered gabled and hipped roof) and the brick-carving of the temple walls. The main image, Manjushri, is accompanied by statues of Maitreya and Green Tara two metres in height. Again they are surrounded by beautiful Rebgong murals, mainly with the same motifs as in the dukhang. The panels of the skylight are painted with Menla, Buddha's life story, and Yamantaka. More than a dozen thangkas depict Tsongkhapa, the Gelugpa's founder, and one of them depicts the life story of the great Lamaist reformer.

A new lama residence was being built behind the assembly hall. The four remaining incarnate lamas of Chamru Monastery all occupy political and administrative positions in the county and prefectural governments. This may be a reason for the rich ceremonial schedule of the lamasery, as nearly every month a grand ritual or festive occasion is held.

5.2. The realm of sacred lake Kokonor

5.2.1. Tshonying Island

According to an old Tibetan legend the origin of the Blue Sea—as the Mongolian word *Kokonor* and Tibetan *Tsho Ngombo* may be translated—is related to the anger of a Tibetan god living far away. As he lived so far off, the people in the Kokonor plains not only refused to obey his will, but even denied his existence. That is why he decided to drown all of them. When the nomad families saw their grassland inundated, they repented of having been disobedient, and the deity had mercy upon them. He sent his mightiest eagle to throw a huge rock into the heart of the lake, thus blocking the hole out of which the water was streaming onto the steppes.

This is but one of the many legends explaining the emergence of Lake Kokonor.¹³ Although there are a number of remarkable monasteries in the hills around the lake, it is the small temple on the island of *Tshonying Mahadeva* (Chin. *Haixin Shan*, meaning ‘mountain in the heart of the lake’) which is considered as the sacred Kokonor realm’s most important religious site.¹⁴ The island of about one square kilometre lies more or less in the centre of Lake Kokonor, about 30 km from its southern shore.

According to historical records, the first temple there was built as early as during the Chinese Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD). The handful of monks who used to stay here had to take with them at least one year's provisions as they lived isolated for most of the year. Only during the winter months, when the ice on the lake froze hard enough, could their sacred island be reached safely on foot; otherwise boats were not allowed on the lake. Later temple buildings were erected on the remnants of a Tang dynasty fortress that had been constructed in 747 when a Tang-Chinese army fought against the Tuyuhun Empire. The year after, it was destroyed by Tibetan armies of Tubo. Later, a small Lamaist temple, having an assembly hall set in the cliffs on the isle's southern coast, was constructed on those

grounds, with white stupas and mani heaps as concomitant features of the sacred site.

Initially Tshonying Mahadeva had been a place of animistic worship; later it was discovered as an ideal site for meditation and Buddhist practice. After the success of the central Tibetan Yarlung dynasty and the development of Lamaism, the island and Kokonor Lake were connected with the founding myth of Lhasa's Jokhang Temple. When the latter was established, the builders had problems due to an underground lake, and whatever they erected always crumbled again. Only when a lama discovered this secret were the underground waters diverted from Lhasa to Amdo—thus enabling the Tibetans to build their temple, while in Amdo vast parts of the grasslands were flooded by Lake Kokonor.¹⁵ In this way, Tshonying Mahadeva expresses the spiritual association with the far-away core of Tibetan civilization.

5.2.2. Satho Ganden Monastery

At the western end of Lake Kokonor, there is a peninsula protruding from the shore with the famous Bird Island (Chin. *Niaodao*) just off the lakeshore. It can be reached on a side-road branching off from the Xining-Golmud highway at Heimahe. The former site of the monastery Satho Ganden Gompa (*sa mtho dga' ldan dgon bkra shis chos 'khor gling*, Chin. *Shatuo Si*),¹⁶ is on a mountain ridge near the northeastern coastline, from where another road leads to it. When in 1653 the 5th Dalai Lama Lobsang Gyatsho came back from his visit to the Chinese imperial court, he passed by here and was curious about an *obo* (Tib. *lhatse*) he saw on the ridge. Originally that was the principal place of worshipping either a local mountain deity or the god of the lake. Lobsang Gyatsho stayed here for a while and held ceremonies to honour the deity of the sacred lake. That is why the site became one of the main ritual places of the Kokonor area, and by 1665 a tent camp monastery was established.

With the gradual expansion adobe structures were introduced, and the local Satho incarnation line started in 1820. In the 1940s the Nyingmapa monastic complex had grown from the initial mani heap to a sizeable lamasery with 130 monks. They owned an assembly hall of 400 square metres ground space, the roof decorated with four golden dragons. In 1958 it was demolished, and the new site high above today's Bird Island Hotel on the west shore penin-

sula was chosen by the former incarnation of Satho Lama. The lamasery's current Ganden Rimpoche has studied in the important Dzogchen Monastery in Kham (Sichuan part).

The dukhang of 300 square metres was rebuilt after 1982. It is fitted with Rebgong murals of Mahakala and Kubera at the inner side of the entrance, thus protecting the hall against enemies of the Dharma. The paintings on the side-walls depict Shakyamuni, the Dhyani Buddhas Aksobhya and Amitabha, Herukas, the adibuddha Vajrasattva, and the most loved bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara and Green Tara. The main images of the altar wall are Padmasambhava, Maitreya, Shakyamuni, four-armed Avalokiteshvara, and Padmapani. In the right front corner of the assembly hall we find an interesting portrayal of the mountain deity Machen Pomra and the mythical Shambhala paradise.

To the left of the dukhang we see the Menpa Dratshang, the lamasery's medical college, again fitted with similar Rebgong murals, though centring of course on Menla. Adjacent to Menpa Dratshang is the incarnate lama's residence. The gönkhang is the hall that can be seen on the upper right end of the monastic complex; for fear of the presumed harmful effect of the sight of wrathful deities women are not allowed to enter. The protectors, with the most eminent of them named as Amnye Yullha, Semchog, Tsemar, Damchen Dorje Legpa, and Kubera, are heavily draped with cloth and khatags so that they can hardly be seen.

5.2.3. Kangtsha Gönchen

Mongols and Tibetans in the western and northern Kokonor area belonged to those who have for long been living in regions practically void of religious architecture. Some of those districts did not have lamaseries until the 19th, some even until the 20th century. So the legend has it that when a lama from central Tibet's Sera Monastery travelled to Amdo, he came through Kangtsha, where the local chief and tribesmen asked him to fix a favourable site and to send somebody to give them religious teachings. Going on to Tsongkha and Rongwo, he found a sufficiently learned monk in Detsha Monastery¹⁷ whom he sent to spread the Gelugpa teachings in Kangtsha. In 1915 he established a first tent camp monastery. Its location is in a verdant valley at the southern foot-hills of the Qilian Shan mountains, reached via a dirt road

full of pot-holes, 25 km north of Kangtsha county town.

It was after 1925 that work was started to erect temple buildings and monks' quarters of adobe in traditional style, and named Kangtsha Gönchen Ganden Chöphel Ling (*rkang tsha dgon chen dga' ldan chos 'phel gling*),¹⁸ *Gangcha Da Si* in Chinese. Until 1958 there were more than 200 monks looking after one single temple hall, with the Sera Chenba as their tulku. He is the reincarnation of the lama who once was sent here from Detsha Gompa. In 1997, the young 5th Chenba Lama had just returned on completing his two year-long studies in the Tibetan Buddhist Academy at Beijing's Yellow Temple (*Huang Si*). He presides over a community of nearly 100 monks.

Destroyed after 1958 and in 1967, the monastery was first reconstructed in 1981 again as a tent camp. In the meantime it had grown; there is more than a single dukhang and it also has a temple. The paintings of the big assembly hall are well done and depict Pelden Lhamo, Green Tara, Vajradakini, Vairocana, Avalokiteshvara, and Samvara on the left side. The main images on the altar are Tsongkhapa, Vajradhara, Aksobhya, Tara, Avalokiteshvara, and behind the throne a centrally positioned Jowo Rimpoche flanked by an edition of the Kanjur on the lower and Tanjur on the upper book-shelves. Among a number of smaller statues there are 21 Taras, with Manjushri and Maitreya in special glass-shrines. The religious representation is rounded off by paintings on the right side of the hall, starting with a *tshogs shing* of the Gelugpa order. Roughly in the form of a genealogical tree, the main teachers, dharmapalas, and yidams of the Yellow Hats are arranged around Tsongkhapa. This painting is followed by portrayals of Shakyamuni, Amitabha, and Mahakala.

On the slope behind the dukhang is a small building named Shyangkhang which was the former residence of Chenba Lama. A bit further up and to the left, a Dukar Lhakhang was nearing its completion in 1997. This temple is dedicated to the Gelugpa protector deity Usnisasitatapatra.

5.2.4. Lamo Garthog

Lamo Garthog Küntu Dewa Ling (*la mo sgar thog kun tu bde ba'i gling*),¹⁹ the 'Monastery of the White Buddha' (Chin. *Baifo Si*),²⁰ is another example of a

historically relatively unknown, yet politically important monastic site. Located about 30 km to the west of Haiyan county town,²¹ it was the main monastery of the famous Gelugpa lama Tshagan Nomon Khan (1660-1728), Shabdrung Karpo in Tibetan, of central Amdo's Lamo Dechen Monastery.²² He belonged to a Tibetan tribe living in the Yellow River bend, in the area between Thrikha and Lower Rongwo (Jainca). His predecessor, the first Lamo Rimpoche was sent by the 3rd Dalai Lama to Amdo to further propagate the Gelugpa doctrine. He therefore established a first tent camp monastery which is considered to be the forerunner of Lamo Garthog.

During the Jiaqing period (1796-1820) of the Qing dynasty, the affiliated Tibetan tribe moved its pastoral grounds to the northeastern Kokonor area in what today is Haiyan county. The then 5th Lamo Rimpoche (or Shabdrung Karpo) ordered the tent monastery to be moved to that area as well and named it Tshamsum Namgyal Ling (*mtshams gsum rnam rgyal gling*). In 1916, the 7th Shabdrung Karpo, Gedün Tenzin Norbu (1873-1927) started to build a permanent monastery at today's site, and within four years his residential buildings and a greater and a lesser sutra hall were completed. The 88 monks were driven out of the lamasery when all but the residence was destroyed in 1958. After being reopened in 1981, reconstruction was veritably booming, probably due to the high political positions of the recent incumbent lama, who is well into his nineties. The monastery again has about 100 monks.

The ornate Great Sutra Hall is painted and fitted out superbly. Mahakala and Pelden Lhamo guard the entrance. Above the door, the three Dharma Kings of the imperial period of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen and Rälpacen, have found their place. To the left Rebgong murals depict Usnisasitatapatra, Machen Pomra, Gesar, Yamantaka, Kalacakra, and Manjushri. The altar shrine has impressive bronze statues, 1 to 1.2 m high, of Shakyamuni, Maitreya on lotus-seat, Manjushri, and Green Tara. A veiled protector cannot be seen, but in front of it we have an image of a Blue Garuda, the mountain deity and protector of Ragya Gompa in Ngolok Prefecture. Green Tara, Shakyamuni, Avalokiteshvara, Dorje Legpa, Kubera, and a Dakini conclude the paintings on the right side. The mythical realm of Shambhala, Amitabha, Menla and a thousand-armed

Avalokiteshvara are further portrayed high up on the panels of the temple's skylight. In the hall's centre hangs an appliqué-thangka depicting the present incarnate lama.

To the right of the dukhang is a temple containing the tomb stupa of a predecessor of the incumbent lama, being about 1.5 to 1.8 m high. To the left of the stupa we have a statue of Manjushri and a beautiful new thangka with a mandala motif. On the right side is a thangka depicting Shambhala, and an image of Sengge Naro, the 'Buddha with the lion's roar'. The murals of the right hand wall depict Kalacakra. Leaving the temple hall, the visitor is back on the terrace which extends along the front of several buildings, all of which are elaborated in a mixed Chinese-Tibetan architecture. With the pagoda-like assembly and stupa halls in the middle, a row of Chinese hipped roofs with green and yellow tiles appear to line up at the foot of the hill. On the valley floor a huge courtyard shelters the lama's residency, with a Chinese gate as its entrance.

At the bottom of the monastery, near the valley's exit into the plains, a row of eight big white chörten mark the beginning of the monastic complex. In the upper part it is not strictly delimited from a neighbouring monastery that, at first glance, looks like a college of Lamo Garthog. It is the reconstructed Gelugpa monastery Gompa Soma (*dgon pa so ma'am mda' bzhi'i dgon gsar rnam rgyal gling*), also named 'New Monastery' or Xin Si in Chinese.²³ Its original location was about 20 km southeast of Haiyan town near Bayan village. Built in 1854, it was, like Lamo Garthog, a branch of Centsa's Lamo Dechen Lamasery. Demolished in 1958, it was decided to reconstruct it at the side of Lamo Garthog, as its 30 monks come under the same incarnate lama.

The main assembly hall of Gompa Soma again shows a combination of Tibetan and Chinese architectural features, with the lower portions of the structure being typically Tibetan and the roofs having the Chinese hipped-roof outline. The temple halls and side-buildings follow the typical Chinese scheme of a long axis, here gradually leading uphill through a flight of steps. The adobe walls of the ordinary monks quarters together with this Sino-Tibetan architecture create an atmosphere that is reminiscent of Huangzhong's Kumbum Monastery. That everything was built, carved and painted anew, it is an excellent example of the revived craftsmanship of Tibetan, Hui and Han-Chinese artisans. The new

paintings with their delicately applied strong colours create a vivid impression which affects the senses. Besides the lamas and deities ordinarily depicted in Gelugpa temples (Yama, Mahakala, Kalacakra, Samvara, Yamantaka), here again we have Machen Pomra and a Shambhala mural. Behind the throne at the altar side, we see a painting of the Gelugpa *tshogs shing*. Among the protectors here we can also find the 'Old White-bearded Brahman', Dramzehi (*bram ze hi*), an emanation of Mahakala. Legend has it that when Phagpa was at the Yuan emperor's court, Khubilai Khan wanted to discuss the Hevajra Tantra with him. As Phagpa had never read it and did not know where to get it in such a short time, Mahakala appeared to him in the form of an old wise Brahman, and handed him the Tantric scripture. Thus Phagpa was helped to impress the Mongol Emperor and convince him of the Buddhist wisdom.²⁴

5.3. Mongolian monasteries and temples of the Tsaidam Basin

The desert basin of Tsaidam is generally considered to be part of Amdo, because during the Manchu-Chinese Empire it was included in Kokonor Province—of which *Qinghai* is the literal Chinese translation. Although the Tsaidam Basin, with an average height of 2800 m above sea level, may be seen as *mdo*, 'lower land', this Mongolian living-space is part of a realm constituting an extended Mongolia, rather than part of Tibetan Amdo. On the northeastern and southern fringes, high up on alpine pastures, we again find Tibetan nomads, while in the northwest Yugurs and Kazakhs may be found. Until 1949 this part of the Tibetan Plateau was one of the world's least populated environments: just some 16,000 nomads living in an area now comprising the Haixi Prefecture of Mongols, Tibetans and Kazakhs,²⁵ equalling the size of Germany. Even now, after a decade-long Chinese immigration into the virtually uninhabited spaces of the Tsaidam deserts, the average population density is still only around one inhabitant per square kilometre.

The name of the region, *tshva 'dam* in Tibetan spelling, is derived from the Mongolian words *tsha* for salt and *dam* for swamp, marsh. It therefore indicates the outstanding features of the basin, which besides being a desert is also characterized by large salt lakes and surrounding brackish swamps. Only

within the eastern portion of the geographical Tsaidam, within the boundary of today's counties of Ulan, Dulan and Tianjun, do we find a Tibetan-Buddhist society that has been able to erect some sizeable temples and monasteries.

5.3.1. Tulan Monastery

Tulan Monastery or Ganden Sangngag Yarphel Ling (*tu lan dgon dga' ldan gsang sngags yar 'phel gling*),²⁶ although named *Dulan Si* in Chinese, is not located in Dulan but near Ulan county (*Wulan xian* in Chinese).²⁷ It lies by the roadside, when coming from the southern shore of Lake Kokonor and branching off from the Golmud highway in Chaka township (*Tshaka*), about 60 km distance from the latter and 15 km to the northeast of Ulan.

Tulan Monastery was established during the Qing dynasty's Qianlong reign (1736-95) and developed as one of the three major lamaseries in western Qinghai. It was the most important among the Mongolian monasteries in the entire province. The founder Gunchuk Tashi was the grandson of one of the six sons of the famous Gushri Khan. He was ordained by the 5th Panchen Lama Lobsang Yeshe (1663-1737) and was given the religious name Lhatsün Jamyang Gyatsho. In 1735 he was bestowed with the title of a Jasakh Prince, thus initiating the great influence of Tulan Monastery's lamas, with Tulan Khutuktu as the most eminent among them. Some of its lamas were so learned that they got high positions in Amdo's famous Labrang Monastery. At its heyday Tulan Gompa had some 300 monks; by 1949 the number had already dropped to less than 140. First it was considered as a branch of Lhasa's Ganden Lamasery, but in the 1930s the gompa was placed under the authority of Chubsang Gompa in Tsongkha.²⁸

The old monastery, before its 1958 demolition, was quite extensive, having three large stupas on its grounds, a Great Prayer Hall, a Kalacakra Temple, a lesser dukhang and two colleges (Exoterics and Kalacakra). Reconstruction works since 1980 brought back 100 monks who now are building up a medical college to serve the neighbouring villagers. Near the lower end of the lamasery, a big white stupa has been erected within a small walled-in compound. Doors painted with a big Namchuwangden emblem on the four sides lead us to assume that there are chapels within containing images of major Buddhist deities (like Kalacakra).

Tulan Gompa's dukhang seems to have partially preserved the old structure, for the entrance through the adobe wall leading into the front courtyard of the assembly hall is still flanked by the remnant of an old 'invocation tower'. At the upper end of the steps leading into the vestibule of the Tibetan-style wood and brick structure, two simple stone lions are kept. Two pillars in front of the entrance are remarkable for the lively Chinese dragons embracing them. Paintings of the four Lokapalas are done in a smaller scale in the upper part of the outer front wall of the sutra hall. Inside, there are some attractive Rebgong murals on canvas, depicting a Green Tara on the left side and behind the altar, Kalacakra, Yamantaka, and Tsongkhapa.

An extraordinary remnant of the old monastery is the Büriyenshat (*bürijen-ü šatu*) or 'invocation tower' just beside the entrance to the assembly hall's courtyard. This architectural feature is a typical element of Mongolian monasteries, never documented elsewhere other than in the steppes of the Central Asian nomads. Even today it is hardly seen anywhere in Mongolia, as the communist upheaval there also eliminated many traces of the old traditions. This 'trumpet-stairway', as the Mongolian word may be translated, found in lamaseries in the steppes was mostly erected on wooden pillars and could be climbed up to by a ladder. More sophisticated versions were constructed of bricks or adobe walls, even with a Chinese roof topping it. On those towers the monks announced the religious services by blowing either religious conch-horns or Tibetan long-trumpets.²⁹

A second, yet larger temple hall was erected by 1997. It is a typical Amdo mixture of Tibetan and Chinese architectural styles, an elaborate Rebgong brick structure topped by a gabled and hipped roof. The nearby lama residence is a two storey wooden building of Han-Chinese workmanship, with good wood-carving at the balconies and the entrance. Built on a stone platform it overlooks a garden like courtyard full of trees and flowers—maybe an allusion to the paradise-like situation of the monastic complex in a semi-desert natural setting.

One of the greatest former treasures of Tulan Monastery was a complete Kanjur edition written in gold letters. Some of the 108 volumes are said to have survived, each volume weighing 30-35 kgs. People tell that a strong camel could not carry more than four volumes at once.

5.3.2. Ahandalai Monastery

Although often named Bongtag Monastery, inferring that the monastic complex of Geden Shedrub Namgyal Ling (*bong stag dgon pa dge ldan bshad sgrub rnam rgyal gling*)³⁰ belongs to Tibetan tribes in neighbouring Tianjun county (Tib. Bongtag Themchen, 60 km to the northeast), it is generally known by its Mongol-Chinese name *Ahandalai Si*. This is derived from the shape of a mountain that is thought to resemble a female mountain deity, Ahandalai. Located at a height of 3700 m above sea level, it is only about 15 km from Ulan county, reached via a rough track difficult to find when branching off from the main road leading to Delingha, the administrative seat of Haixi Prefecture (Tib. Tshonub). Within this short distance, one is guided from the salt-lake desert across a large gravel field into a hilly area, covered with sparse meadows. Halfway up the mountain the monastery expands across the slope. There a tiny river provides sufficient underground water, and a fantastic view is obtained of the rough, yet colourful and varied landscape.

Ahandalai Monastery had two predecessors located further south between Ulan and Tshaka (Chin. Chaka). The first one was established near Tshaka in 1812, but as it was often subject to raids, it was relocated in 1904 and again in 1920, finally to today's site. It developed as the main monastery of the 18 Tibetan tribes of Bongtag, who had moved into the area some three centuries ago. Before that time they had been pastoralists of the easternmost parts of the Yellow River bend around today's Tongde county.³¹ Following the teachings of Sera's Jepa Dratshang, Ahandalai or Bongtag Gompa is a Gelugpa branch of the famous Raga Gompa on the banks of Ma Chu (Yellow River). There was an important exoteric college here where astronomical, medical and other sciences were also taught. Many times learned lamas from Raga and Detsha³² lamaseries were invited to Ahandalai and actually came here to teach and increase Bongtag's regional importance. As teaching matters were taken very seriously, the monastery's college produced a number of wise lamas, and many of the important physicians of western Kokonor area and Tsaidam Basin were graduates of Ahandalai Gompa.³³

In 1958 there were 240 resident monks and seven lamas. The monastery has been reconstructed since the devastations of 1958 and subsequently, except

for ten former residential buildings for tulku and the extensive accommodation for ordinary monks. The Maitreya Temple was rebuilt, as was the dukhang, in its previous two-storeyed type. It was enlarged with a third floor topped by a Chinese-style gabled and hipped roof. This impressive Jampe Lhakhang, situated at the upper right side of Ahandalai Lamasery, is furnished with excellent Rebgong murals and sculptures. The elaborate decorations start in the vestibule with finely detailed paintings of bhavacakra, Machen Pomra, Green Tara, Manjushri, a Sera Lama, Tsongkhapa, a protector deity and a handsome Gandharva. Inside, the main image is a giant Maitreya, some 10 to 12 m high and flanked by smaller statues of Padmasambhava and Manjushri. The entrance to the temple is guarded by six-armed Blue Mahakala and Pelden Lhamo paintings.

The large assembly hall is a typical Tibetan-style Rebgong dukhang brick structure. It too is decorated with wonderful paintings of the best Rebgong quality, having murals of two dharmapalas at the entrance—Yama to the left, and on the right side the warrior-like Blue Garuda (*Chungngön*) who is veiled except for his face and part of the armour. A remarkable thangka portrays the mythical kingdom of Shambhala, while more murals depict Green Tara, Vairocana, Shakyamuni and the 35 confessional Buddhas, an eight-armed Avalokiteshvara, Padmasambhava and Medicine Buddha. Most interesting among those paintings are two *tshogs shing* ('genealogical tree') which are executed in a round shape and therefore of a somewhat untypical form. The one on the left hand wall has a Shakyamuni in the centre of a perfect circle, with Padmasambhava just below him, a great entourage mainly of Buddhas, several dharmapalas and Samvara as the single Tantric yidam. The *tshogs shing* of the right hand wall's mural depicts a nearly spherical Gelugpa 'genealogical tree', having Tsongkhapa at its central point. The latter's statue accompanies a central Shakyamuni image of the altar, further flanked by statues of siddhas, a four-armed Lokeshvara, Vajrapani, and a large number of books. Besides the Kanjur, Ahandalai Monastery traditionally owned complete editions of Tsongkhapa's works and teaching materials of Sera Lamasery's Gomang College.

Behind the dukhang, we found, in 1997, a courtyard enclosed on three sides by a prayer-wheel gallery. In the yard's centre stood a small cubiform

temple for Tara—Dölma Lhakhang—topped by a tiny hipped roof. The main image was sheltered in a glass shrine on the altar, a Green Tara of about 1.2 to 1.5 m high. All around the other emanations of Tara are portrayed in 30 to 40 cm high bronze statues, as well as Tsongkhapa, Amitayus, White Tara, Manjushri, Vijaya. The side wall niches contained many smaller figures of the Green Tara, flanked at the front by paintings of Machen Pomra to the left and Shambhala to the right.

5.3.3. Panchen Shingde Gompa

The small but important monastery of Panchen Shingde (*pan chen zhing sde dgon pa*)³⁴ in Dulan county of Haixi Prefecture is remarkable due to its architectural features. Named *Xiangride Si* in Chinese,³⁵ this Gelugpa institution is located by the roadside and easily seen when driving from Xining to Golmud. It is reached about 4 km before arriving at Xiangride township (60 km from Dulan county seat).

The Mongolian Shyanggya tribes living in the area before Tibetan Shang tribes migrated here³⁶ became subordinate to the Panchen Lama circa 1736. As the Tsaidam river headwaters leave the Yarmothang Plateau and cut through the Burhan Buddha Shan mountain range, the land here is suitable for agriculture, hence the name Panchen Shingde with *shing sde* meaning ‘agricultural community’ or ‘field, arable territory, tribe’.³⁷ It is most likely that a concession in this respect was granted when the Qing emperor’s envoys—the grand lamas Chöphel Dargye and Lobsang Peljor and the imperial amban Nasutai—visited the 5th Panchen Lama.³⁸ However, no monastery or temple had been built in Xiangride prior to the 6th Panchen Lama Pelden Yeshe accepting the Manchu emperor’s invitation to attend the Chinese court in Beijing. He left Tashilhünpo Monastery of Shigatse and set out for Amdo in 1779:

Lerjing, Governor-General of Shaanxi and Gansu, being alarmed by the Emperor’s order, prepared to set up tents for the Panchen and his party to spend the night and repair all civil houses and roads along the route the Panchen would take in the areas under his administration. ...

The Sixth Panchen entered Qinghai on the eighth day of the eighth month. There the Grand Minister Superintendent of Qinghai

took over responsibility for the supplies of the Panchen - providing the group with one thousand pack oxen, four hundred camels and four hundred tents, as well as fuel, forage grass, etc. ...

When the Panchen arrived at the Tongtian River [i.e., the headwaters of the Dri Chu/Yangtse], Kalon Dorkhawa, whose duty it was to escort the Panchen to the border of Tibet, went back to Lhasa. ...

On the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month the Panchen and his party passed Mt. Shiaorola, where he was welcomed by over two hundred representatives of Mongolian and Tibetan monks and laymen in Qinghai. Among them were some religious leaders, such as Chosang Hutuktu and Jiye of Kumbum Monastery. Besides, over ten thousand Mongols and Tibetans of Qinghai also went to welcome him.³⁹

The construction work started in Panchen Shingde the same year (1779) was probably for the Panchen’s reception. This is most likely to have taken place near Xiangride-Panchen Shingde, because there is hardly any place to the west of Lake Kokonor where the land could sustain the large crowds bidding him welcome.

Panchen Shingde developed in two separate, yet associated complexes. One of them was the Dechen Phodrang, serving religious ceremonies, while the other one, Dechen Labrang, was used as courier station and hostel for travelling lama delegations. The latter was destroyed by a flood at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1924 the 9th Panchen Lama Chökyi Nyima had it reconstructed on a nearby ground. An assembly hall of 1250 square metres was erected with a mandala-like layout. Four years later the monastic complex covered more than 3 hectare of land. Its religious name being Pande Chökhör Ling, the administrative institution’s name was ‘Xiangride station of the Panchen Erdeni’s Xining Office’.

When the British Younghusband military expedition invaded Tibet in 1904, the 13th Dalai Lama fled to Mongolia and China. Upon his return to Tibet in 1913, he stayed in Panchen Shingde. In 1937, the 9th Panchen Lama passed away in the northern Kham town of Jyekundo. Due to political intrigues⁴⁰ a ‘substitute body’ lay in state in Panchen Shingde

to be revered by the Buddhist faithful, before the Panchen's remains could be brought back to central Tibet. These two events in Pachen Shingde's modern history have made the lamasery extremely popular among Mongolian and Tibetan monks and laymen in Amdo.

From around 30 monks during the 18th and 19th centuries, by its heyday in 1958, the monastery had 70 monks. The courier station was maintained by more than ten civil servants. The monks were sent home in 1958. A short reopening in 1961 led to the gompa being closed again during the Cultural Revolution. The monastic complex of Pachen Shingde does not seem to have been destroyed as such. Rather, it deteriorated as nobody was looking after the buildings. After 1984 it was restored with the support of government funds. Since then the monastery is once more enclosed by a mud wall, the assembly hall constituting its core.

This dukhang may be tiny, but it offers some interesting details. The roof of its balcony-encircled upper floor, heavily coloured and decorated, is topped by a star-like wheel of the Dharma. With the two deer on either side, the Buddha's first teaching is fully symbolized. Dragon heads protrude from the corners of the flat roof. From the walls and all across the courtyard hang hundreds of prayer-flags. The temple halls are as tiny as the buildings, but they offer the pilgrims images of all the major deities for worship.

A visit to this small lamasery in the transition zone between the Kokonor grasslands and Tsaidam deserts is impressive. Most remarkable is the outside view of the core complex encircled by its white-washed mud walls. With Tibetan prayer-flag posts at all four corners and in the centre, Pachen Shingde's architectural features combine the major cultures of the greater region: a cube-like Tibetan-style dukhang in one corner is in contrast to the Chinese roof of a pavilion-like structure and a Mongolian type of stupa (*suburgan*). Somehow it is the architectural fusion of cultural contrasts which have persisted historically and politically until today.

5.3.4. Tshaka Monastery

(*tshva kha'i dgon dga' ldan dge 'phel gling*),⁴¹ *Chaka Si* in Chinese, was founded in 1800 in today's Tshaka township (Chin. *Chaka zhen*). It is now located about 5 km to the north of Tshaka and difficult to find without local assistance; only one of

the many tracks across the gravel fields leads to its site at nearby mountains. After a military raid in 1928 this Gelugpa monastery was relocated to the foot of the Tsanggye Mountains. Subordinate to Lhasa's Ganden Monastery, it was governed by Tulan Gompa of Ulan county. Of the 70 monks living there in 1949-1958 only 15 were long-term residents of Tshaka Gompa. It was destroyed in 1958. The 1985 rebuilding has seen the return of nearly a dozen monks and a single incarnate lama.

5.3.5. Pekhokhö Monastery

(*pe kho kho'i dgon dge 'dun bde skyid gling*),⁴² *Beikeke Si* in Chinese, is a Gelugpa monastery of those Khoshot tribes who originally were under the leadership of the Mongol prince of the outer banner of western Kokonor. It was founded as a tent camp lamasery under the guidance of the 4th Pachen Lama Lobsang Chökyi Gyantsen (1570-1662), and became domiciled when the first adobe structures were erected in 1922. Since then its location is about 40 km north of Ulan county town, in a place called Altsitu. Before 1958, there were 80 monks, subordinate to Tulan Gompa, most residing in their family homes. The lamasery experienced the common outcome of the 1958 demolition, reconstructing in the early 1980s, now with 10-20 monks looking after the dukhang and the single tulku's residence.

5.4. Qilian Shan area & Lamaist Grotto Art on the Silk Road margin

The northern rim of the Tibetan Highland is marked by the Qilian Shan mountain range, also known by the name Nan Shan.⁴³ It is the eastern continuation of Kunlun Shan and Altyn Tagh which separate Tibet from Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). While the deserts and steppes on the plateau side of those ranges are the realm of Mongolian and Tibetan nomads, the long and narrow stretch of fertile oases between the Gobi deserts of Mongolia and the northern fringe of Tibet are populated by Muslim Hui, Han-Chinese and some Mongolian farmers. The Qilian Shan mountains in between, besides being on the fringes of the Silk Road, are historically an area to which scattered remnants of various nations retreated, hence an ethnic patchwork of Yugur, Kazakh, Tu, Mongols, Tibetans.

Evidence of Tibetan imprints are often seen, especially in the Buddhist grottoes cut out of the rocks

of the Qilian Shan and their southern foot-hills. Silk Road grottoes in general cannot be discussed here, however, but we have to refer to some more or less unknown examples of Lamaist grotto art within the range of the Tibetan Highland. Only the easternmost parts of Qilian Shan area have lamaseries, embracing the Tibetan-named regions of Arig, Pari and Thendru, i.e. today's administrative units of the Qilian and Menyuan counties in Qinghai and Sunan Yugur Autonomous and Tianzhu counties of Gansu Province.

5.4.1. Semnyi Monastery

The region of Pari (*dPari*) expands to the north of Tsongkha. It is reached from Xining via Datong county, comprising the Datong river valley and the adjacent mountain regions, mostly made up of present-day Menyuan county, the population of which is predominantly Hui Muslim. Pari's most important lamasery can be found 4 km south of the river, about 35 km to the east of Haomen town (county seat), near Dazhuang village.

The Gelugpa monastery Semnyi Ganden Dargye Ling (*sems nyid dgon dga' ldan dar rgyas gling*), *Xianmi Si* in Chinese,⁴⁴ is said to have been established as early as 1540. Yet, some sources note that its founding was proposed by the 3rd Dalai Lama when he came to Pari in 1584. *The Political and Religious History of Amdo* names the founder as Lhari Khenchen Tsheten Döndrub (*lha ri mkhan chen tshe brtan don grub*) of Yerpa Monastery near Lhasa. In 1623 he supervised the construction of a small assembly hall supported by 16 pillars. When soon afterwards Rgolong Lamasery's incarnate lama Sumpa Khutukhtu, Damchö Gyantsen (*dam chos rgyal mtsan*), took the responsibility for Semnyi Gompa, it was greatly enlarged: a temple of four storeys height and an exoteric college were constructed (1626). In 1692 the dukhang was widened into a 60-pillar-large sutra hall, and within a short period Semnyi Gompa developed as the largest Gelugpa lamasery in the region north of Tsongkha and Lake Kokonor. The gompa's flourishing was interrupted when, after Lobsang Tenzin's upsurge in 1723, most of central and northern Amdo's monasteries were destroyed by a Chinese punitive expedition.⁴⁵ By 1725 Semnyi Gompa was already restored with imperial funds and endowed with a title displayed on a sign-board, 'Illustrious and Brilliant Temple', (Chin. *Xianming Si*). Originally Semnyi

was the monastery for the neighbouring affiliated Tibetan tribes, but its head lama, Achung Rimpoche, became the religious and political leader of Pari and one of the most powerful personages in northern Amdo.

The monastic complex of Semnyi Gompa backs onto forested mountains on its western side and thus faces the morning sun. The built-up area of nearly one hectare gradually extends up the slope, creating the impression from afar of three platforms or a multi-storeyed temple. The entrance on the ground level is through a gate-building covered by a Chinese-style gabled and hipped roof. The whole building is entirely constructed of wood, with the assembly hall positioned in the very heart of the complex. Small iron bells and metal plates are fixed to the elaborately worked beams, chiming as soon as there is a wind or breeze. Inside the hall, carpets with dragon motifs wrap around the pillars.

Both in the 17th century and during the 1950s there were 100 monks including four tulku in Semnyi Monastery. In 1915, 160 monks were recorded,⁴⁶ the gompa being highly esteemed by the people apparently due to one of its incarnate lamas. At the same time the Gelugpa's opposition to Nyingmapa activities in the region was sufficient to give rise to animosity between them.⁴⁷ Since its reopening in 1981, one dozen monks have returned to service (by 1990).

5.4.2. Ganglong Shiku Si

Not far from Pari's main monastery of Semnyi Gompa we find a rare example of Lamaist grotto art and one of the few places deep within the Tibetan Plateau influenced by the Silk Road. About half-way between the lamasery and Menyuan county town, a road leading southward (towards Tsongkha's Serkhog Monastery and Datong county) branches off in Shengli village. After having crossed the Datong river another road leads eastward to Baha village and into Ganglong gorge. There, on a 15 m high and 100 m long sandstone cliff, an image of Shakyamuni Buddha and of a Tibetan-style stupa are carved out of the rocks. Although there are some Tibetan inscriptions, the artefacts of the site could not yet be dated.⁴⁸

The images of Ganglong Shiku Si, carved out of the natural rock, are realized as semi-relief and in caves, or rather, in concaves of the slightly curved cliff. The image of Shakyamuni in meditation posi-

tion and surrounded by two nimbus is 1.2 m high and 1.8 m wide. To its eastern side, there are still some remains of a lotus seat and a stupa base made of stucco.

The main feature of the Ganglong grottoes is the relief stupa which, due to its total height of 6 m, can be seen from afar. In the centre of a concave indent extending up the entire height of the cliff, this chörten of 2 m width has been cut 20-30 cm deep into the rocks. The base of the chörten extends to a height of 2.6 m and ends with a ring of lotus flowers, while the stupa's main body—bumpa, rectangular harmika, spire and the sun and moon symbol at the top—amounts to 4 m. A Buddha niche, 1.4 m high and about 1 m wide is cut out of the bumpa and gives access to a cave of 3.7 m length, 3.2 m width and 2 m height. In the centre we find a stucco Buddha image. To the western side of the stupa, there is a vajra and a dharmapala image worked onto the rock surface.

Up to now this is the only example of a rock-cut chörten found within the bounds of Qinghai. Its features obviously are very similar to the stupas of Mati Si grottoes, one of the most important Buddhist Silk Road cave complexes on the northern rim of the Tibetan Plateau.⁴⁹

5.4.3. Drugu Gompa

or Ganden Chökhör Ling (*'bru gu dgon dga' ldan chos 'khor gling*), Zhugu Si in Chinese,⁵⁰ lies 72 km to the east of Menyuan county town in Jiefangcun village. It developed out of a hermitage that already existed during the late Ming dynasty. In 1644 Döndrub Gyatsho (1613-1665), abbot of Serkhog Monastery, initiated the establishment of Drugu Gompa on the compound of the former hermitage. The Pönlop (local ruler) of Arig, the region to the west of Pari, soon had a faculty of philosophy erected, and later a Tantric college was added. Following Lobsang Tenzin's revolt and the subsequent punitive expedition, Drugu Monastery was demolished and only rebuilt in 1732, under the guidance of Rgolong's 2nd Mindröl Khutukhtu. As this lamasery was built about a decade before the establishment of Tsongkha's important Serkhog Monastery (in 1650),⁵¹ Drugu Gompa is often seen as the latter's mother lamasery, although traditionally it is treated as a branch of Serkhog Monastery. Having three temple halls, two colleges, eight lama

residencies, and 77 monks in 1958, Drugu was of a considerable size. Except for two residential buildings, it was destroyed after 1958, and reconstructed from 1983 onwards. By 1990, six monks were looking after a small dukhang.

5.4.4. Qilian County (Chilen)

Pehu Gompa

(*pe hu'u dgon dga' ldan thos bsam gling*), Baihu Si in Chinese,⁵² a small, yet historically interesting Gelugpa monastery, lies about 70 km to the southeast of Qilian county seat. It may be reached by driving from Haiyan's Lamot Garthog Gompa towards Qilian, but going eastward after having crossed the upper reaches of Datong river. A tent camp monastery in Yushu Prefecture, nearly a thousand kilometres further south, established in the 17th or 18th century, is considered to be Pehu Gompa's forerunner. During the late Qing dynasty (19th century), the affiliated Tibetan tribe moved northward into today's area in the southern part of the Qilian mountains. Similarly, in 1929 a new tent lamasery was formed in the pastureland of Muri, in the southeastern part of Qilian county. By 1943 the monastery became settled, the first structures being built of adobe. Due to the influence of Mongolian families who traditionally live in the area around Lake Kokonor, the temple and sutra halls were constituted out of a tent and a yurt. This architectural feature was retained when the monastery was reconstructed after 1983. Of the pre 1958 40-odd monks, 17 had returned by 1990, but none of the six incarnate lamas. This previous incredibly high tulku ratio (1:7) most likely was due to the political importance of the site: *pehu* (Chin. *baihu*) was formerly a military, more or less battalion size authority, and then a Chinese administrative unit. The proximity of the political leadership of the region may have attracted important lamas.

Arig Ganden Chöphel Ling

(*a rig dgon dga' ldan chos 'phel gling*), Arou da Si in Chinese,⁵³ developed in a similar way to Pehu Gompa. The local Arig tribe originated from the grasslands in the area between Drakar Treldzong, Mount Amnye Machen and the eastern part of Yarmothang, being natives of what is the southern part of today's Xinghai county. When at the end of the 16th century Sönam Gyatsho, the 3rd Dalai

Lama, came to Amdo, he was asked by the Arig tribe's leaders to come to their native land. He fulfilled their wish and encouraged the founding of a monastery. To begin with it was not more than a hermitage, enlarged only after the visit of the 5th Dalai Lama, and named Ganden Chöphel Ling. The first incarnation of Arig Rimpoche went to study in central Tibet and enlarged the monastery upon his return. His successor, Lobsang Dampa Dargye, established an exoteric college and initiated the extensive ritual and ceremonial activities that later attracted large crowds of people. Before a big section of the Arig tribe moved northwards into the Qilian Mountains, the number of their monastery's monks had grown to almost 400.

The pastoral grounds once relocated, Arig Monastery was re-established, though on a smaller scale. In the 1940s under the guidance of the local leaders, its further development received a big impetus, so the number of monks grew to about 250, with 15 tulku among them. Before 1958, there were five sutra and temple halls at Arig Ganden Chöphel Ling. Most interesting was the construction of a joint assembly and temple hall which consisted of seven yurts and tents woven of yak-hair. Partial demolitions in 1958 and 1966 rendered a reconstruction necessary, which was begun after 1980. Though rebuilt on a smaller scale, Arig Monastery is said to have an adobe sutra hall again and a yurt-like temple. By 1990, two dozen monks were looking after these.



Plate 6. Old photo of Lamo Garthog (before 1959)



Plate 7. The Yangshan tombs, among numerous Meso- and Neolithic sites in Qinghai, lie 20 km southwest of Minhe county town. These 218 tombs of the Majiayao culture were excavated in 1979-1981

6. Relics of Non-Buddhist origin

Cultural relics and historical buildings in Amdo cover a variety of ancient and historical civilizations of which different ethnic populations were the bearers. As the northeastern-most part of Qinghai province is in the proximity of the Silk Road and Inner China, the earliest signs of human settlement and economic activities are found in the Haidong, Huangnan and Hainan districts. Thus central Amdo may be seen as an important archaeological area, especially for researching the Majiayao and several other Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures. It would be a serious mistake to believe that Qinghai, or Amdo, would have been totally hostile to human settlement from prehistoric times because of its difficult natural features as we know them today. Being a gateway onto the Tibetan Plateau, central Amdo has seen many ethnic groups come and go. Numerous kingdoms and nomad realms arose and declined, yet they left their traces—be it relics of their economic activities, material culture, ruins of old cities and graveyards. Some of those remains in Qinghai will be examined here, while the cultural relics of the other parts of Amdo—in Gansu and Sichuan have to be dealt with in a separate volume.

6.1. Ruins of the ancient Hor Kingdom

The Rikon map of ethnic distribution and history of civilization of Tibet¹ marks a historical site in central Amdo called *Hor Khar*. According to its location—100° 30' E and ca. 35° 25' N—it should be the place which Rock has described as the ‘hoary ruins’, remnants of the seat of the ancient Hor Kingdom:

The southern ruin was that of a Hor village site. Not far from the northern ruin are the square ruins of forts on a promontory of the plain, and also village sites. The forts, oral tradition relates, were erected by the Hor over a thousand years ago to ward off King Kesar of Ling, of whose exploits Tibetan bards sing endless epics; he was here said to have fought the Hor.²

The location is in the Ba valley of Tongde county (Hainan TAP) south of the Thrikha region, between *rGyud par* Mountains and Ragya Gompa. The river Ba Chu is a tributary of the Yellow River, and the area around its main valley is called ‘Bal’ in Tibetan. Ruins are found on both sides of the valley near the county seat of Tongde, Gawasumdo township. One of the ruined forts is described by Rock as surrounded by a recently dug trench (before 1956); it is hard to say if this was formerly there and had been a moat. Furthermore, he noted that to the southeast of this ruin there was an encampment of Hor, the ‘descendants of the Tuyuhun’.

An essential problem to be discussed here is the question: who were the Hor—a pseudo-ethnonym that cannot easily be used to designate a specific people or tribe. Of course we have to consider the proximity to the Amnye Machen mountains and the area occupied by the Ngolok nomads, both featuring in the traditional epic of King Gesar. The different versions of the epic have long portrayed the fight of the hero Gesar against his Ling kingdom’s enemies—the king and people of Hor.³ Numerous scholars assume an Amdo origin for the epic,⁴ and one of the few written versions was handed down by Nyingmapa monks of Karang near Guide⁵ in the Thrikha area, i.e., not that far from the Hor ruins. Still, it is not entirely clear what kind of people were those called the Hor.

Sarat Chandra Das’ *Tibetan English Dictionary*⁶ gives the meaning of Hor as ‘Tartar’, thus indicating a significant Barbarian touch.⁷ The joint term *hor-’dra* also indicates ‘Tartar-like, i.e. of rude and rough manners’. It may be in this sense that in Ü-Tsang, Tibetans from the northern provinces—the herdsmen of northern Tibet—are also called *Horpa*.⁸ Being at times understood as ‘Dzungarian’, i.e. Mongolians from northern Xinjiang (Chinese Turkestan), *Hor-Yüil* also is explained as corresponding exactly to Turkestan, the region adjoining

northwestern Tibet. This meaning is used in Butön's *History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, the *Blue Annals* and Lama Tsenpo's *Geography of Tibet*.⁹ The latter explains the origin of the Tibetan word like this:

The word *Hor* is a corruption of the one called *Hwu'u* in the Chinese language. If one translates the meaning of *hwu'u*, it is 'byangba' (i.e., a man of the north), and if one translates it literally, it is the name of a 'covering' (khebs-ma).¹⁰

In the context of the Gesar Amdo version, central Asian Turkestan can hardly be meant, and several other contextual meanings suggest the interpretation as Mongolian (Tartar in old European usage) or 'nomadic peoples from [the Barbarian] North [of Tibet]'.¹¹ It is quite natural then that in some sources the Monguor people or Tu(zu) are likewise referred to as Hor, since they are descendants of Yuan dynasty Mongol immigrants to northeastern Tibet. In this meaning it is translated in the *Dictionary of colloquial Amdo-Tibetan language*.¹² Furthermore the Yugur, one of the ethnic minorities living on the northern rim or rather slope of the Tibetan Highland, look at the king of Hor in Gesar's epic as being their ancestor.¹³

Only the oral tradition regards those ruins as relics of a Kingdom of Hor. Unfortunately the remains of the presumed Hor capital in Ba, central Amdo, do not yield any materials which can decide this question. The number and expanse of the ruins of old fortifications are impressive, however. Within a range of 40 km from Tongde county seat, the remnants of about a dozen towns and forts can be found. Not too far from the biggest one, which is called Douhou Zong old city ('The Dzong after the fight'), traces of an old irrigation canal of the early 7th century¹⁴ can be made out. Besides the remnants of city and fortress walls and a few fragments of tiles, no significant relics of the material culture of the people living in there have been found so far. This makes it difficult to date the ruins or to relate them to any specific ethnic population.

The ruins of Douhou Zong, lying about 10 km east of Bashui village near the county, are quite extensive. The layout of the old city was irregular, the walls around it having a circumference of 791 m. The wall was built up of compacted loam with a gate 5 m wide on the southern side. Inside the city

there is still a round earthen platform, 1.5 m high and 6 m in diameter, which is hard to attribute as no other relics were found, let alone written documents. The valley's precipitous rim provided protection for one side of the city, while on the other sides a ditch was dug.

The other ruins of walled towns and forts in the area are generally much smaller; all of them are rectangular, some nearly square in shape, with lengths of the mud walls between 34 m and 180 m. The base of the compacted loam battlements is on the average 2 m thick, most remnants no more than 0.6 m. More impressive are the ruins of the old 'cities' near the villages of Cainaihai (40 km to the northwest), Sumdo (west of Gawasumdo township) and Jiawu (approx. 25 km to the southwest). Their protecting walls measured 3 m at the base, some ruins of the city wall still existing being between 1.5 and 4 m high.¹⁵

These ruins on the steppes, in places towering above the Ma Chu canyon's cliffs as if to protect the secret of the Hor kingdom's capital, invite questions. Who reigned here? Was it the Mongols whose few dispersed families still live in the area? Or some Tibetan tribes or any other ethnic populations? One only can say that there was once a Hor civilization, at a much higher cultural level than might be assumed when seeing the barren land all around it.

6.2. Ming-dynasty walls and fortresses

In the West it is generally believed that Chinese presence in Tibetan areas came to an end after the decline of the 'Dragon Throne' occupiers—the Mongol Yuan dynasty. The general view that Amdo reverted to Tibetan control should be discussed further. One fundamental error assuming the build up of a central Tibetan government is the tendency to use the term Tibet in an absolute sense that takes the identity of geographical, ethnic and political Tibet for granted. This might have been true for a certain period of Tibetan history, particularly during the Yarlung dynasty of the Tubo emperors (7th to 9th centuries), but should not be assumed for later periods.¹⁶

During the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the Tibetan Highland was politically torn apart, with different Tibetan noble families and Buddhist monasteries, namely the Sakyapa, Karma-Kagyüpa and later, the Gelugpa, striving for hegemony in central

Tibet.¹⁷ Mongolian tribes were trying to establish khanates in Amdo and the plateau's east was a mosaic of principalities and local chiefdoms.

The Ming emperors saw themselves as legitimate successors of the Mongol Yuan dynasty and as such were eager to establish control over the whole of Tibet. As regular fights against Mongol tribes proved to be exhausting and even more important, there was a shift in the Ming policy in 1447 to a more Confucianist approach to state affairs, the emperors of this Chinese dynasty finally adhered to a less militaristic policy.¹⁸ In areas which could be controlled easily a local administration was built up, either according to the Chinese civilian system, or by using local chieftains (*tusi*) in border regions. Amdo must be seen as an area where the Ming furthered the Tibetan system of 'religion and political affairs joining together' (*chösi nyidrel*). After the Gelugpa's rise this system became the religious ideology,¹⁹ though its roots were formed as early as Yuan-controlled Tibet. This policy, in Chinese called *zhengjiao heyi*, was exercised by generously bestowing titles on the lamas (such as dhyana master, state tutor), combined with direct control wherever possible.

Signs of such direct control can be found in Amdo, meaning that this northeastern part of the Tibetan Highland was under the authority of Ming China, although there were spheres of stronger and lesser control. Eastern and central Amdo may be seen as belonging to the direct administrative system of the Chinese court, while radiating from the Tsongkha and Thrikha-Rongwo regions spheres of declining influence coalesced. To protect the main orbit of authority in central Amdo, a side-system of the Great Wall and construction of fortified towns was built up—as in other border areas of China. This was done to reduce the danger of being prone to nomadic incursions, rather than to protect a fairly hypothetical boundary. Hence the sphere of Chinese administrative authority in central Amdo should be seen as extending farther than the position of the existing lines of the Great Wall and beacon tower system.

Today, ruins and remnants of such Great Wall fortifications can be found mostly in valleys around the provincial capital Xining, which has been a prefectural centre and military garrison for the last two thousand years. As can be seen on the survey map²⁰ (map 10) there were walled fortifications near today's county seats of Datong (approx. 30 km north of Xining), Huzhu (50 km to the northeast), Huang-

zhong (35 km to the northwest and 30 km to the southwest) and Guide (120 km from Xining). Moreover there are some limited remains of Ming dynasty walls in the eastern part of Hualong county and to the south of Jainca. Ruins of walled cities and towns of the Ming dynasty are easily made out and number more than 70. They are predominantly found in the Xining area and in Haidong district (Tib. Tshoshar), mainly spread across the Tsongkha region—with very few examples of such fortifications in Thrikha, Rongwo, Pari and near the southeastern tip of Lake Kokonor.

The area outlined by and large covers the most populated region of Qinghai, with the largest proportion of Han-Chinese and Hui and Salar Muslims, including sedentary Tibetans and Monguor. Inside this agriculturally very productive zone, nearly all county seats (formerly prefectures or sub-prefectures) were protected by being enclosed in walled fortifications: with Xining, Datong, Huzhu, Tumenguan (in *Huangzhong Xian*) and Ledu as some of the most impressive examples, remains of city wall²¹ and Ming-Chinese architecture (drum or bell towers, temples) existing up to these days.

The best preserved by far of all the old Ming city fortifications in Qinghai is the large wall of Guide township in Hainan prefecture.²² It has survived more than six centuries, as it was begun during the Mongol Yuan period; what stands today dates from the Ming era (1380, restored in 1590). The fortifications originally were 2278 m in circumference—with a nearly square layout: the north-south length was 513 m, with 506 m from east to west. The 11.7 m high mud wall's thickness was 8.4 to 9.3 m at the bottom and 4 m at the top.²³ The two city gates on the northern and southern side were fortified as well and thus gave the administrative seat of the town a highly protected position in an area that was close to pastoral tribes, which for the peasants meant a high degree of unpredictability, hence insecurity. In town are some more buildings which represent religious Ming architecture of Daoist significance, like the Jade Emperor's Pavilion (*Yuhuang Ge*).²⁴

6.3. Ruins of other ancient civilizations in Amdo

Amdo is home to a variety of ancient civilizations and historical kingdoms from a number of different ethnic populations. Although many remnants of early

Plate 8. Tubo graveyard near Reshui village, approximately 10 km to the southeast of Chahan Us county town in Haixi Prefecture's Dulan county. These Tubo tombs (8th to 9th centuries) are evidence of Tibetan troops and colonizers' presence in Amdo and Tsaidam



Plate 9-10. Decorated Han dynasty tiles, unearthed in Ping'an county in 1982, kept in Archaeological Research Institute of Qinghai province

settlements are found, research on those ancient and prehistoric cultures is still in its infancy. As Amdo is a natural gateway onto the Tibetan Plateau various peoples immigrated and established their own realms of power and cultural activities. Until now, their traces—mostly ruins of old cities and graveyards—are scarcely evaluated. Here we shall give a short survey of the most important prehistoric and ancient sites:

6.3.1. Liuwan Graves and Museum (Chin. *Liuwan muqun, Liuwan caitao bowuguan*)

This Neolithic site, which is situated in Liuwan village approx. 20 km to the east of Ledu county town, is amongst the most important in the PR of China. In 1974 to 1980, on an area of 11.25 ha, 1730 Neolithic tombs were excavated. The most important of the 35,000 relics are exhibited in the local museum.²⁵

6.3.2. Xihai Jun Old Forts (Chin. *Xihai jun gucheng yizhi*)

Both to the west of Haiyan county town and near the western borderline of the same county are ruins of an ancient city (*Xihai jun gucheng*) and of a fortress (*Gahai gucheng*) of Xihai Prefecture of the Han Chinese Wang Mang dynasty (9-25 A.D.).²⁶ Remnants of the large mud city walls even today are still up to 12 m high and 8 m wide at the base and 2-5 m at the top. Other walled towns of the same era are found near the last railway station in Kangtsha county, before the railway leaves the shores of Lake Kokonor.²⁷

6.3.3. Fusi City (Chin. *Fusi Cheng*)

Near the western end of Lake Kokonor, behind the hills overlooking the shore, the Tuyuhun King Fulianchou had one of his empire's capitals built around 1500 years ago: *Fusi Cheng* (4th to 6th centuries).²⁸ Its sides measure between 240 m and 270 m, with the city wall being 7-12 m high and up to 18 m wide (3 m at the top). Today's Xiangride town (in Dulan county) is near the former capital of the Tuyuhun: the city ruins (*Xiangride chengzhi*) have a square layout, a lateral length of 300 m, city walls still up to 10 m high, at the base 7 m and at the top 2 m wide.²⁹

6.3.4. Dulan Tubo graves (*Dulan Tubo muzangqun*)

In the 7th and 8th centuries the central Tibetan Tubo empire, led by the famous emperors of the Yarlung dynasty, expanded over the entire Tibetan Plateau. The presence of Tibetan troops and colonizers in Amdo and Tsaidam at the time is well documented by Tubo tombs in Haixi Prefecture's Dulan county. One graveyard is situated near Reshui village, about 10 km to the southeast of the county town of Chahan Us, and several other important ones are sited on Xiahua community grounds.³⁰

Another interesting record of the time is a stele put up at the Sun and Moon Pass (*Riyue Shan*) in Huangyuan county (Tongkhor), dating from 733. It is meant to be a boundary marker, delimiting the ancient passage from Tubo into Tang-China.³¹

6.3.5. Heigucheng and other Tang dynasty forts

Major fortresses and walled cities built during the Chinese Tang dynasty are documented in Gonghe, Menyuan and Hualong counties. Most easily reached is Heigucheng, the 'Black Old City' near Daotanghe (between Sun and Moon Pass and Lake Kokonor).³² Other examples are the forts at the entrance to Tiger gorge (*Laohu goukou chengzhi*), 15 km north of Menyuan county, and several examples of fortified bridgeheads along the Yellow River on Hualong county's southwestern borders.³³

Similarly, fortifications of the Chinese Song dynasty can be found in various parts of central and northern Amdo. Ordinarily they were still used throughout the following eras of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties.³⁴

6.3.6. Tiechengshan gucheng

This is one of many good examples of fortified Ming architectural remains.³⁵ Many more can be found in Gomar, Nyenthog and Bao'an villages in Rongwo valley, throughout Tsongkha and in Menyuan county.³⁶

6.3.7. Old trade-routes

Northern Amdo can be considered part of the southern Silk Road network. The few examples of Buddhist grotto art are evidence that caravans from Central Asia passed through the Qilian Shan mountains, Tsaidam Basin and Tsongkha Valley; traces of regular trade-routes can be made out in

Qilian county (*Biandugou gudao*) and Menyuan county (*Laohugou gudao*).³⁷ These were used for nearly 1500 years starting from the 5th century. A grassland track in Henan county (*Gudao yizhi*)³⁸ marks where commercial transport moved from the Ming times, most likely as a link between the administratively controlled areas in central Amdo (Rongwo) and those in the neighbouring provinces of Shaanxi and Sichuan.

6.4. Mosques

As the Muslim population of the Hui and Salar predominate in central and northern Amdo, mosques are an evident feature of the cultivated valleys in Tsongkha, Rongwo, and Pari. Illustrated plates in older travelogues show they were originally of a Han-Chinese architectural style,³⁹ the typical Muslim elements only displayed in decorations and structural modifications. Since this multi-ethnic part of Amdo was a place of frequent conflicts, as with the Muslim uprisings in the 19th century, the mosques had to be rebuilt quite often. The Cultural Revolution was a most significant incident which spared neither temples nor mosques. Rebuilding in modern times also offers the possibility of introducing new structural elements and styles, adding influences from Muslim countries abroad. Therefore the mosques which appear more Islamic, or more ‘oriental’, are mostly an outcome of contemporary reconstruction.

The most impressive and largest mosques in the Qinghai part of Amdo are seen in the provincial capital Xining,⁴⁰ the Salar centre Xunhua⁴¹ and the Hongshui Mosque in Ping’an county.⁴² These are but a few examples of Chinese Muslim architecture in Amdo, while numerous standard *qingzhen Si* (mosques) and their minarets dominate in any village in the Gansu part of Lower Amdo.

6.5. Prehistoric Rock carvings

Amdo and Tsaidam are the site of a large number of prehistoric rock-carving sites, mostly scattered in pastoral areas. The earliest examples belong to the Neolithic Age, while the latest can be dated to Tang dynasty (618-907), that is to say they were carved out at the time of the conquest by Tubo armies.

To the northwest of Lake Kokonor there are the four gorges, Halonggou, Shebuqigou, Lushangou and Lumanggou, where within an area of 200 to 300 square kilometres a great number of such rock images may be discovered.⁴³ Other good examples can be seen in Yeniugou, southwest of Golmud,⁴⁴ in the region between Delingha, Wulan and Tianjun,⁴⁵ as well as in Gonghe county.⁴⁶

The depictions in the gorges of Lusigou and Bahamoligou near Dulan county’s Xiangride are from a transitional period, since Buddhist motifs already appear there.⁴⁷



Plate 11. The former main mosque in Xunhua, Jiezi Qingzhen Si (before 1959)



1. Tsongkha: Kumbum Monastery



2. Fields near Dechen Monastery



3. Ma Chu canyon near Centsha



4. Yarmothang highlands



5. Rongwo valley



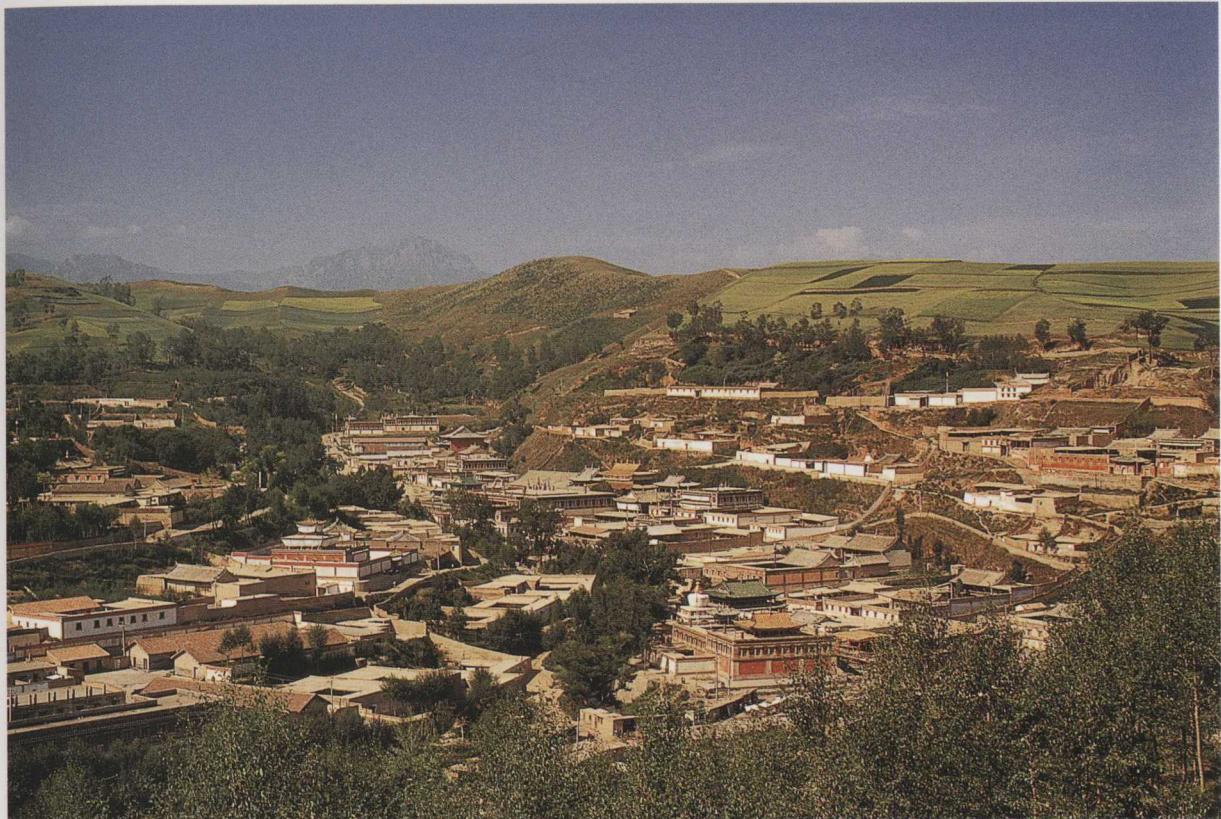
6. Mount Ngolok (Nyenpo Yutse)



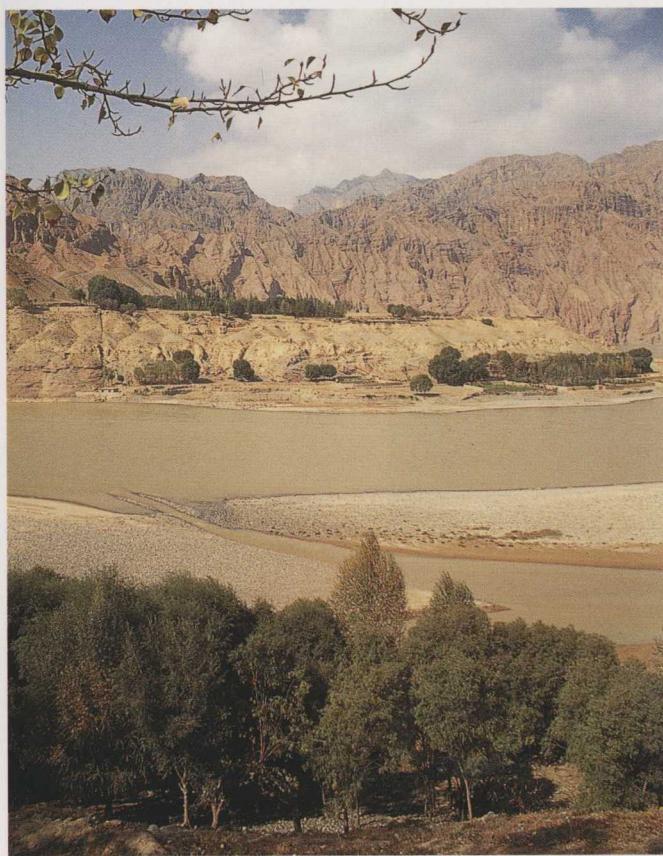
7. Ma Chu canyon in Xinghai county



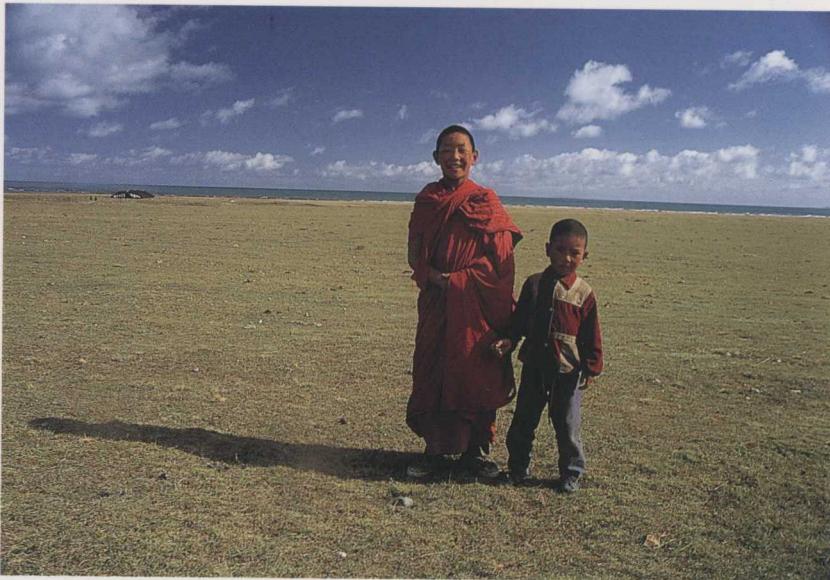
8. Grasslands near Mewa



9. Kumbum Monastery is presently Tsongkha's major lamasery



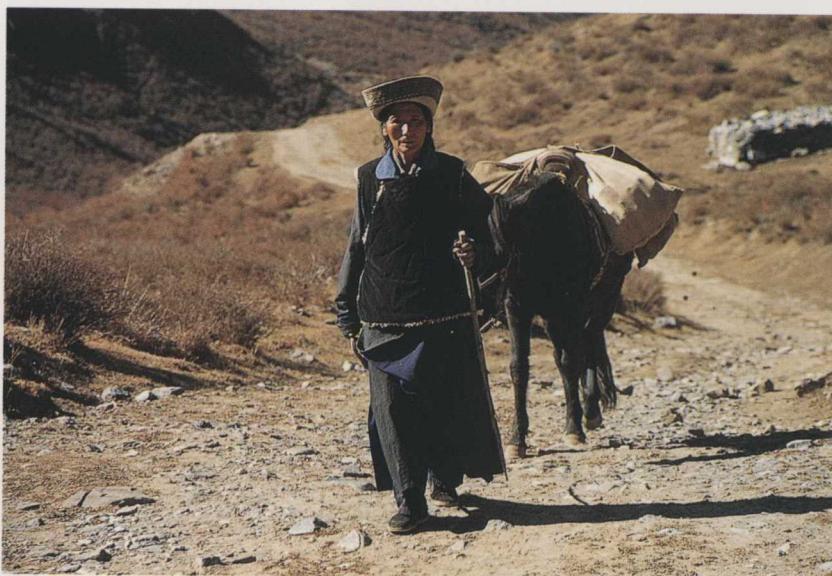
10. Yellow River near Xunhua (Dowi)



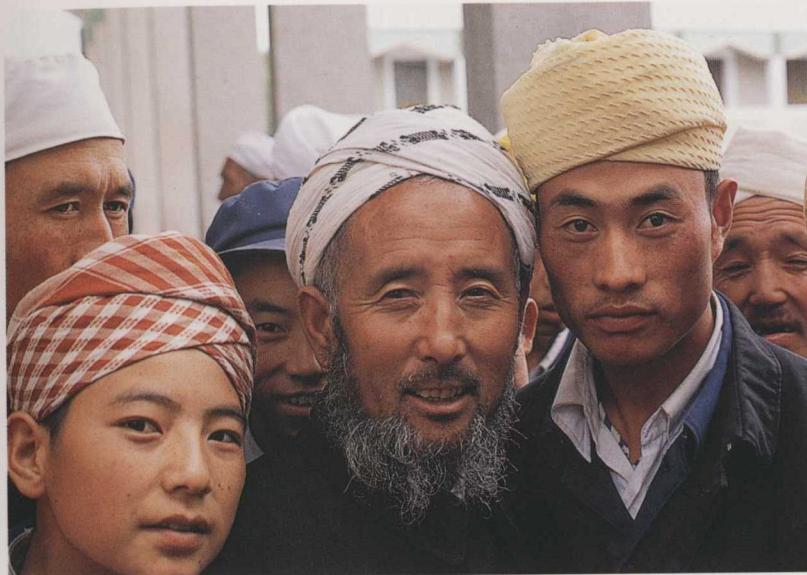
11. Tibetan monk novice
at Lake Kokonor



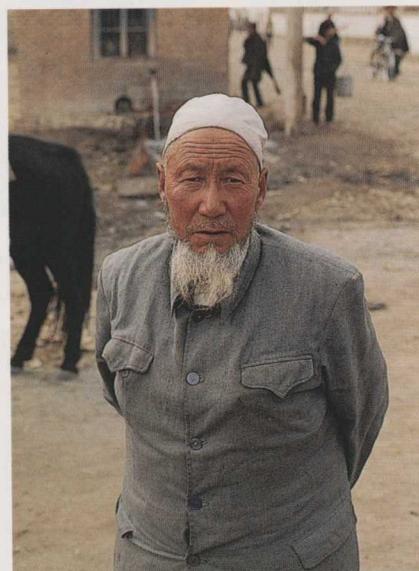
12. Pastoralists of the
Rebong tribe in central
Amdo



13. Woman of the Tu
nationality (Monguor)



14. A Hui-Muslim in Hor (Heri)



15. Salar people in Xunhua



16. Festive nomad woman at the Sun-and-Moon Pass near Lake Kokonor

18. Hor-Tibetan in Sogwo-Arig (Heri)



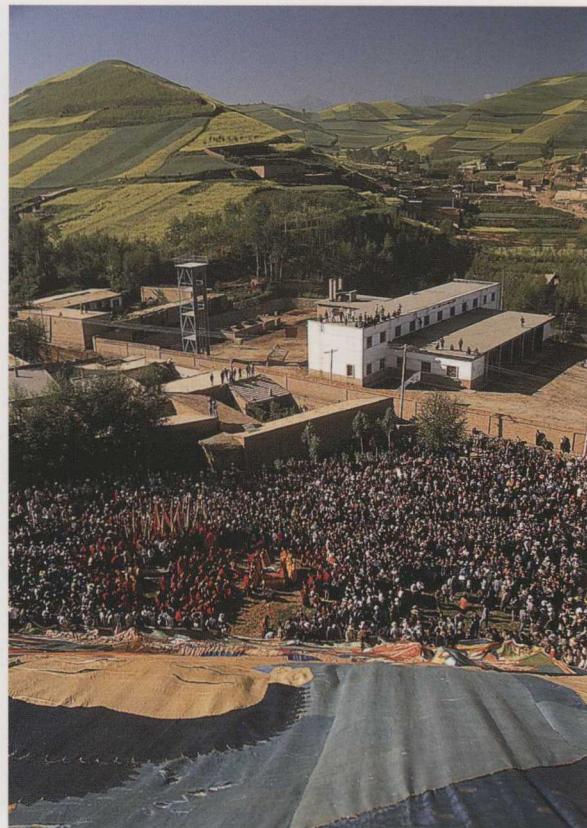
17. Nomad children near Mewa



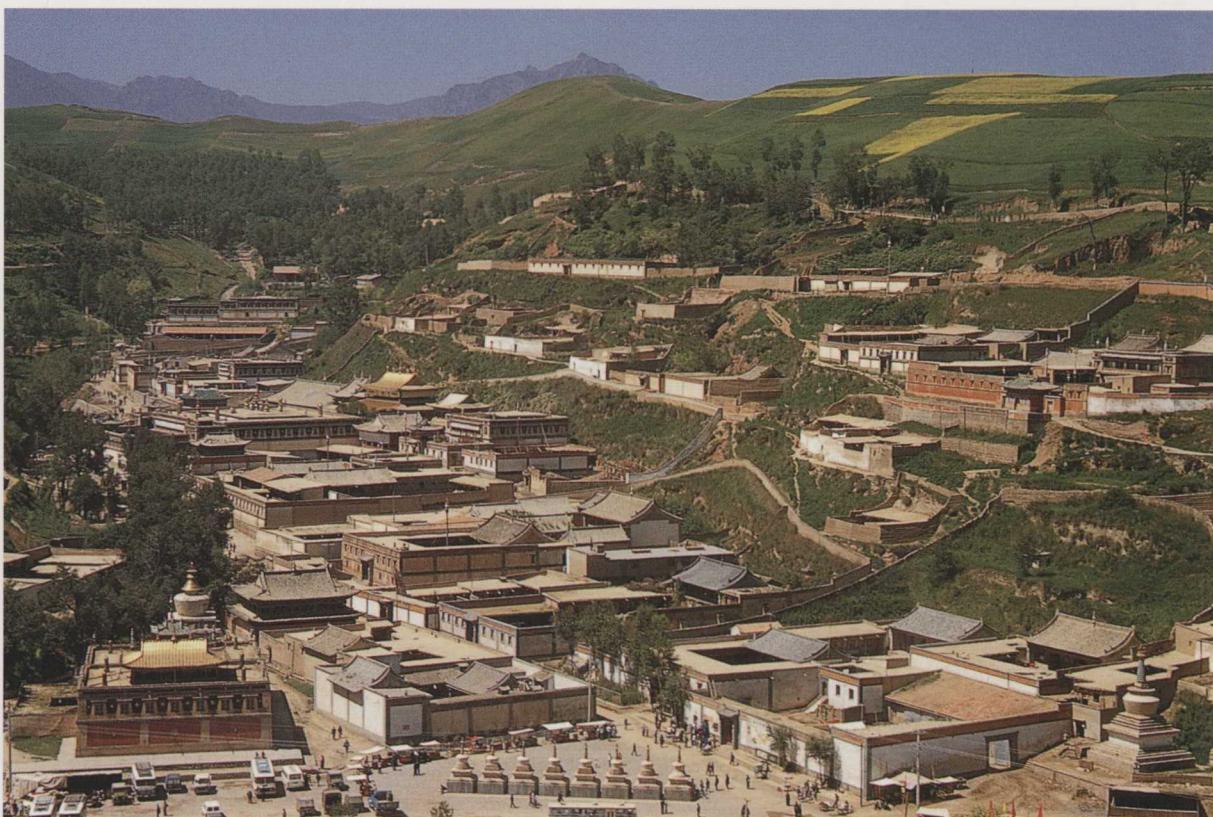
19. Mongolian wedding celebration (Tsaidam)



20. Hui Muslim and Han-Chinese children in Xiahe town near Labrang



21. Unrolling of the large thangka during a festival at Kumbum Monastery



22. Panoramic view of Kumbum Monastery



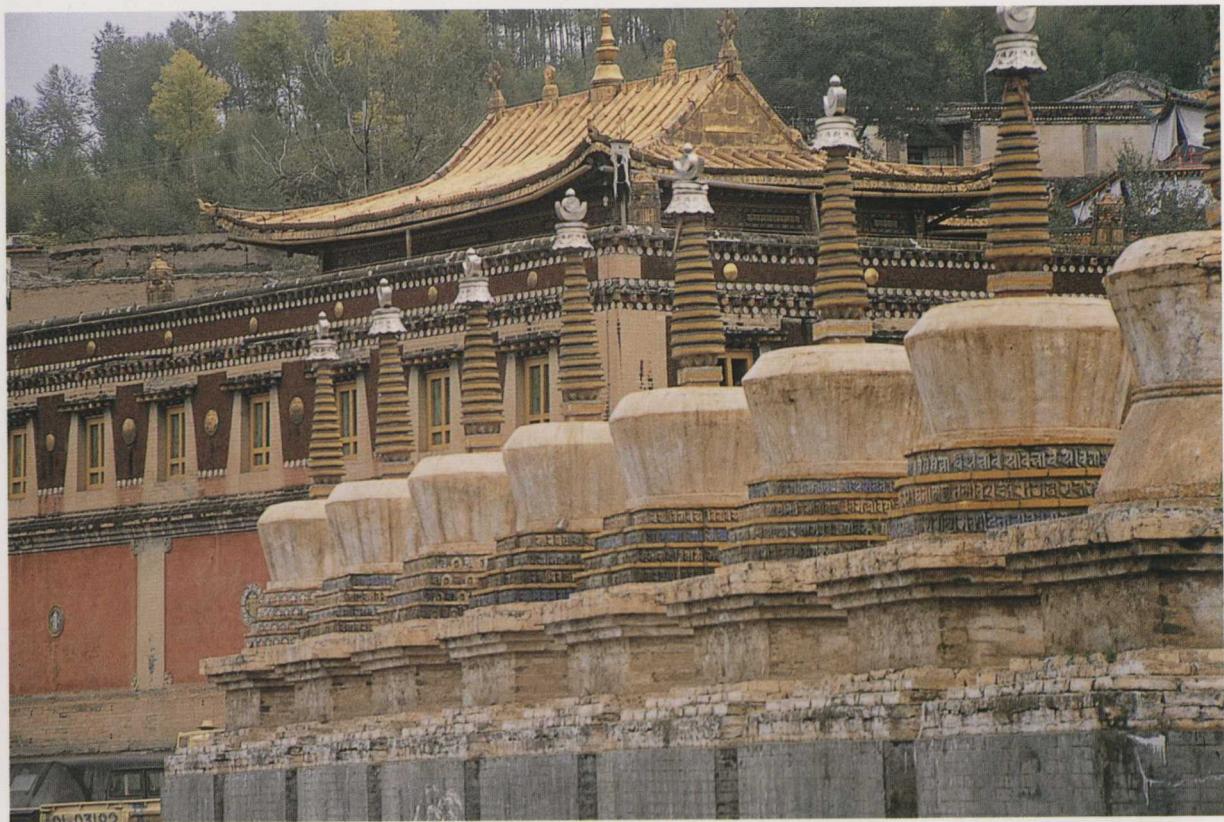
23. Dragon-carpets in the main assembly hall of Kumbum Monastery



24. Mask dance during Kumbum festival



25. Gate chörten of Kumbum Monastery



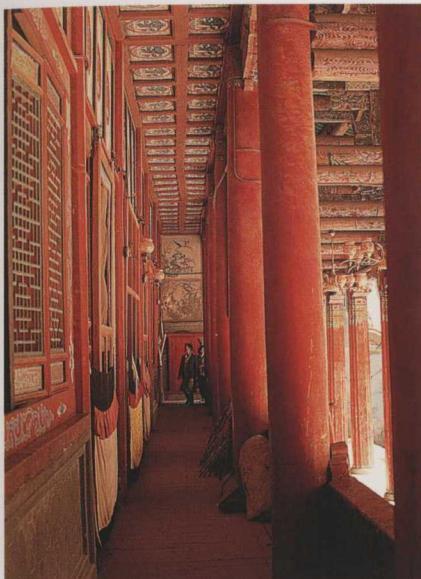
26. The eight chörten near Kumbum's entrance



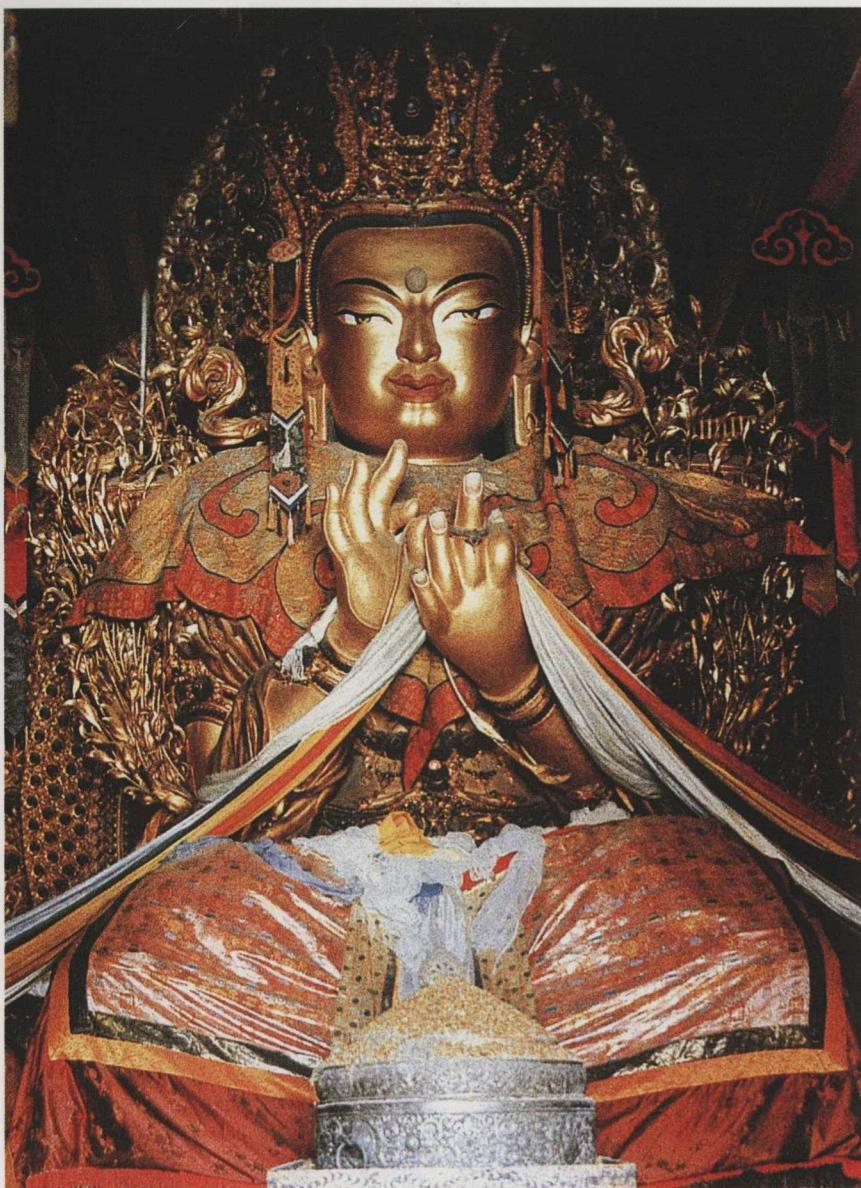
27. Courtyard of Kumbum's Tsenkhang (Chin. Xiao Jinwa Dian)



28. Work in Kumbum's printing establishment



29. Manjushri temple of
Kumbum Monastery



30. Large statue of
Manjushri in Manjushri
Temple of Kumbum
Monastery

31. Mural of the
White Tara



32. Statue of a tutelary
deity





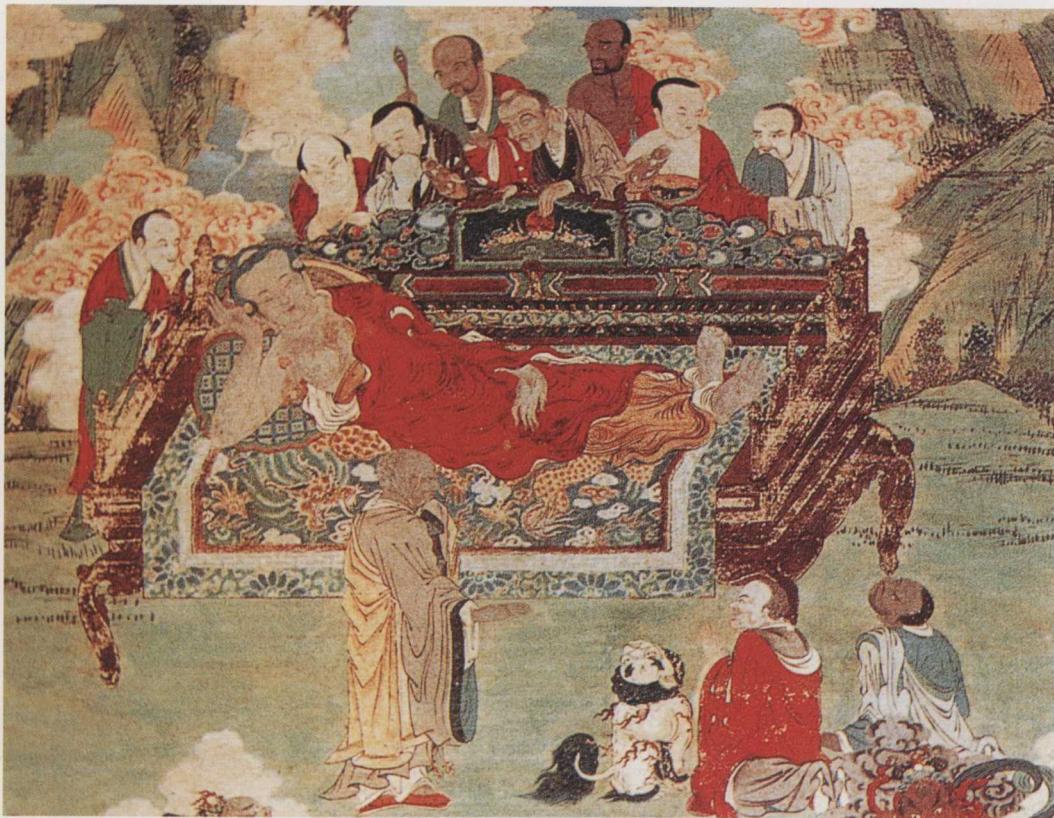
33. Mask dances in the main courtyard



34. The halls of Qutan Monastery are of typical Ming architecture



35. The halls of Qutan Monastery are of typical Ming architecture



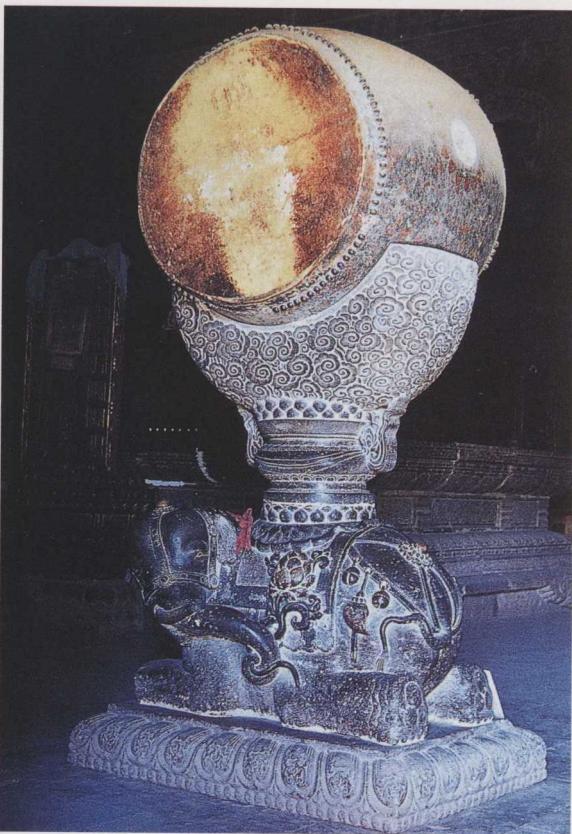
36. Examples of the 400 square metres excellent murals, mostly of early Ming dynasty (15th century)



37. Examples of the 400 square metres excellent murals, mostly of early Ming dynasty (15th century)



38. These murals are painted on the walls of wing corridors which extend around the Hall of the Thriving Nation and its courtyard



39. In the right half of the Hall of the Thriving Nation there is a stone-carved crouching elephant—looking backward, a flower in its trunk, its back supporting an elaborately carved stone pillar-like structure with lively cloud ornaments and topped with a drum



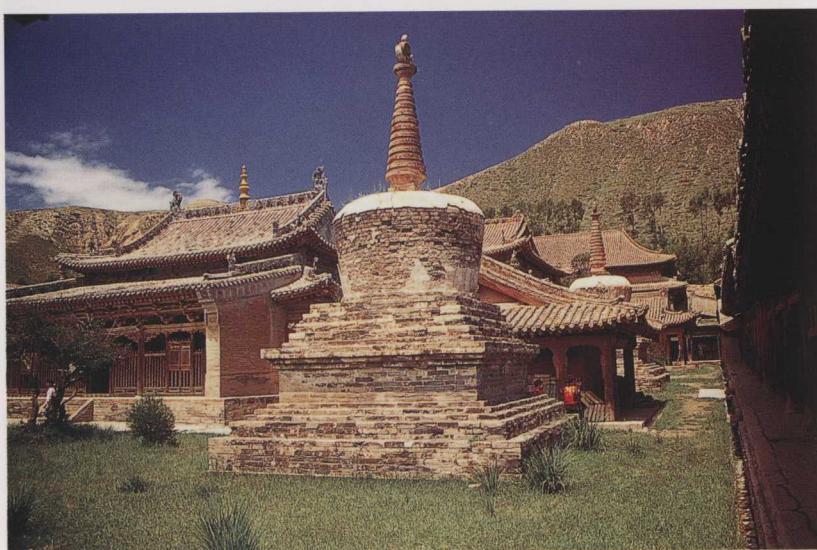
41. Gilded bronze of Avalokiteshvara



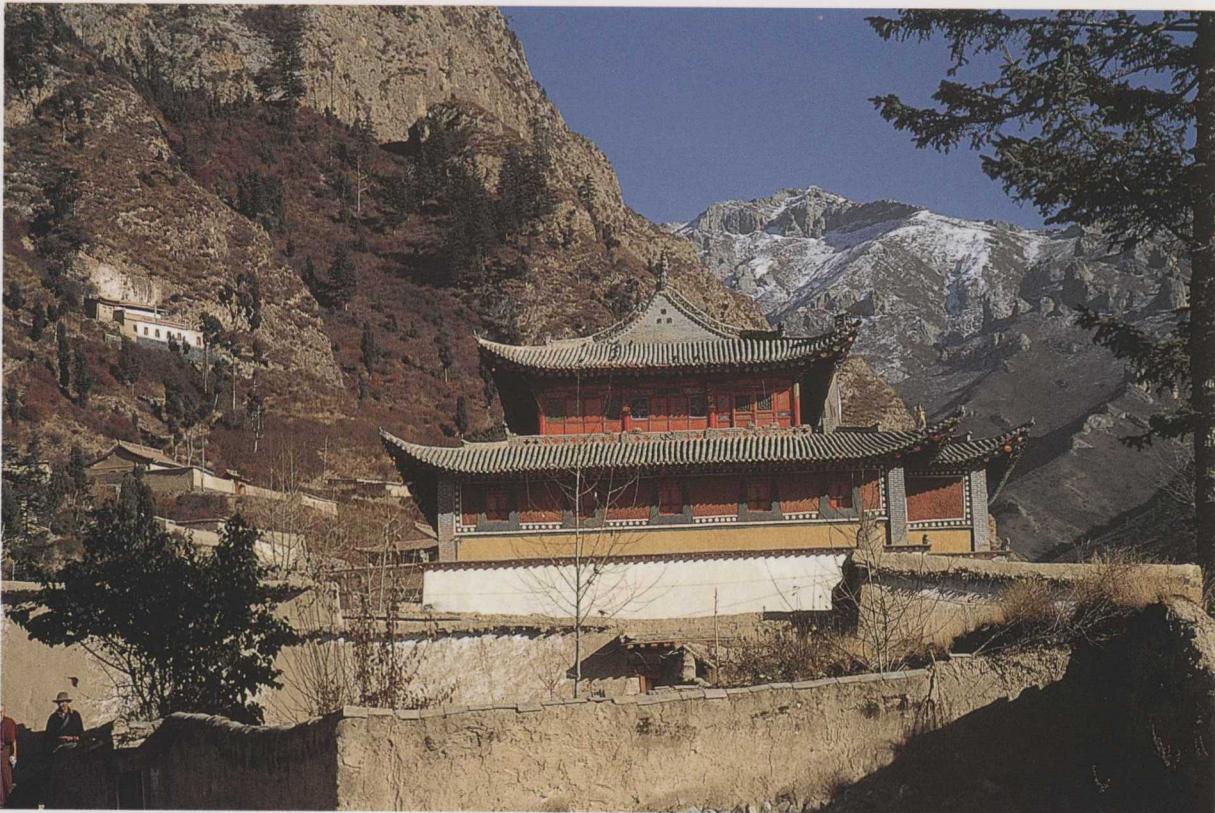
40. Hall of the Thriving Nation



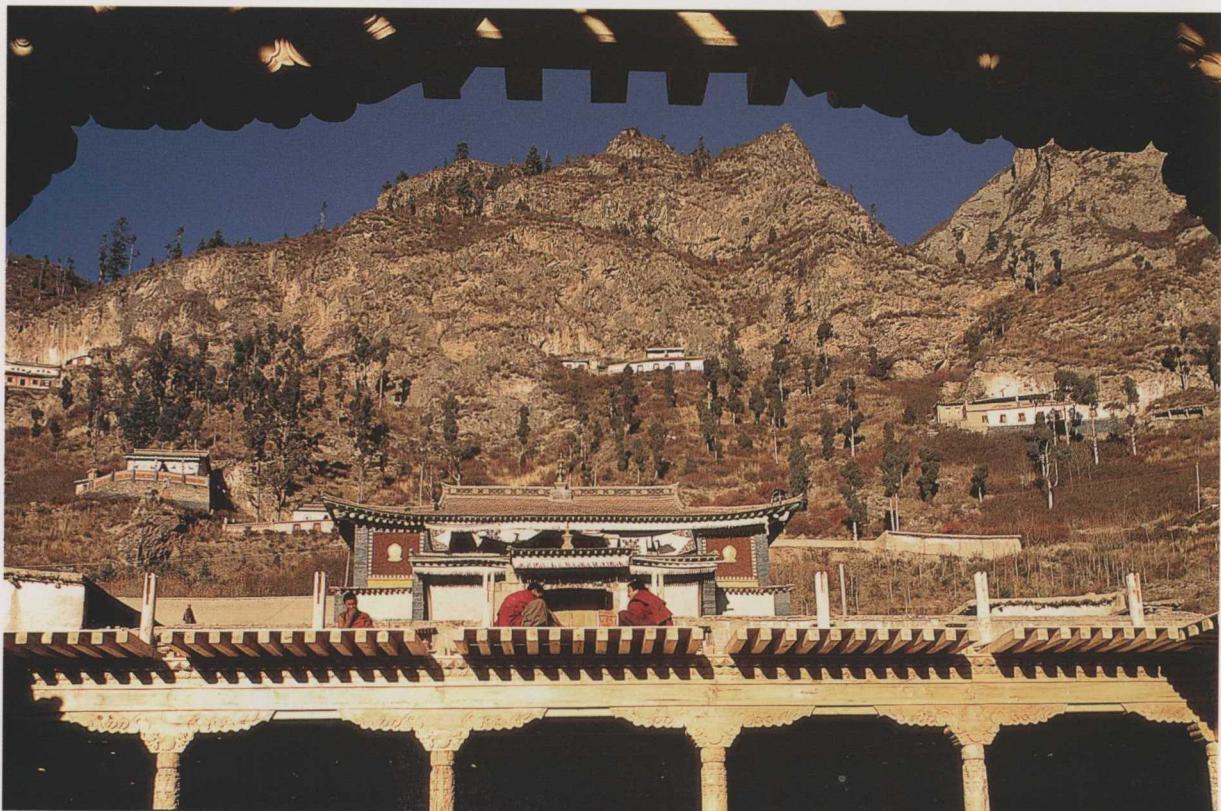
42. In the Hall of the Thriving Nation excellent examples of early Ming paintings (15th century) can be seen



43. White chörten in Qutan Monastery



44. The small lhakhang of Rgolong Monastery



45. Rgolong's main assembly hall being reconstructed (1990-1996)



46. Small temples and hermitages are scattered over the slope behind Rgolong



47. Tianmen Si, formerly a hermitage of Sumpa Khutuktu, developed into a branch monastery of Rgolong

48. Entrance gate,
Serkhog Gompa

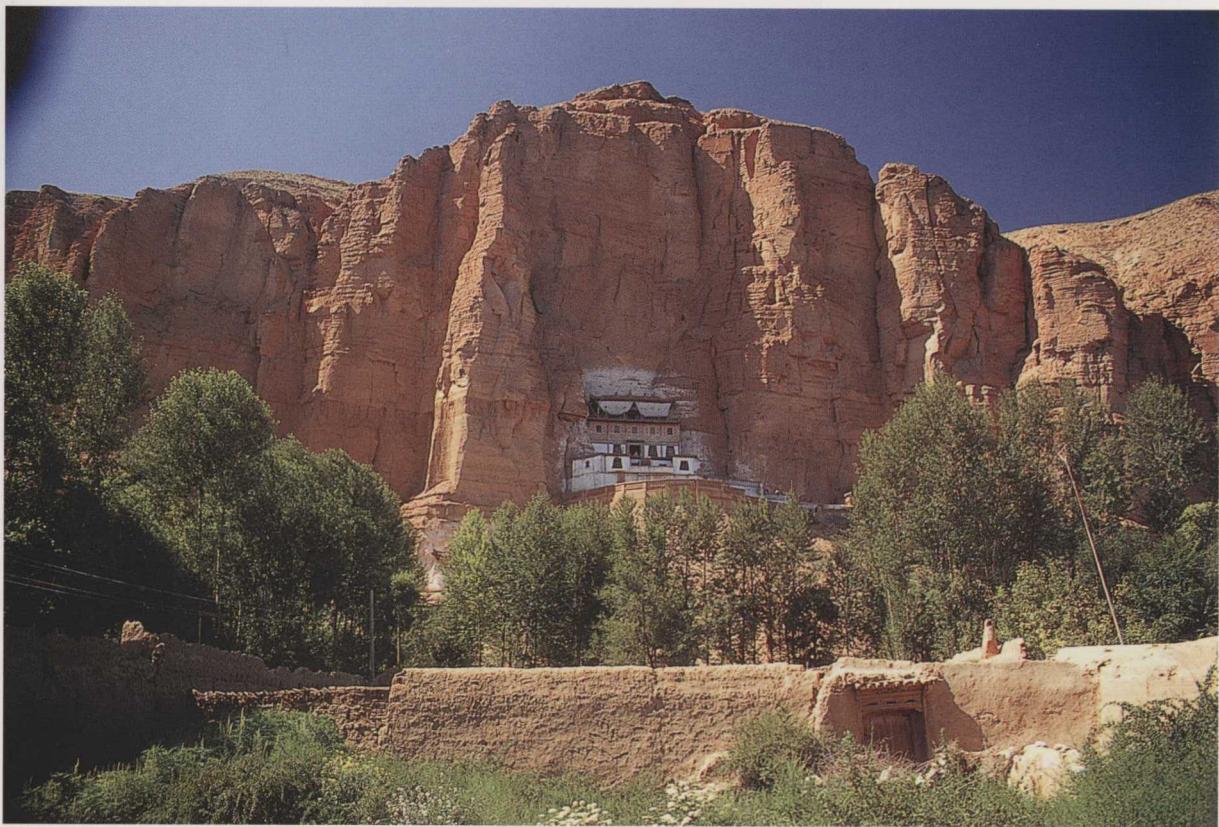


49. Inside the assembly hall,
Serkhog Gompa

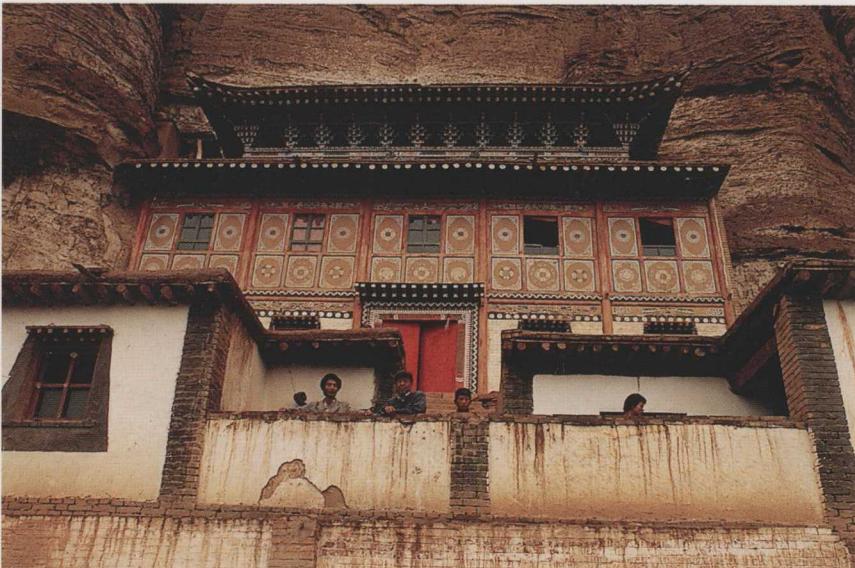




50. Murals on the outer wall of the gönkhang depict protectors, Serkhog Gompa



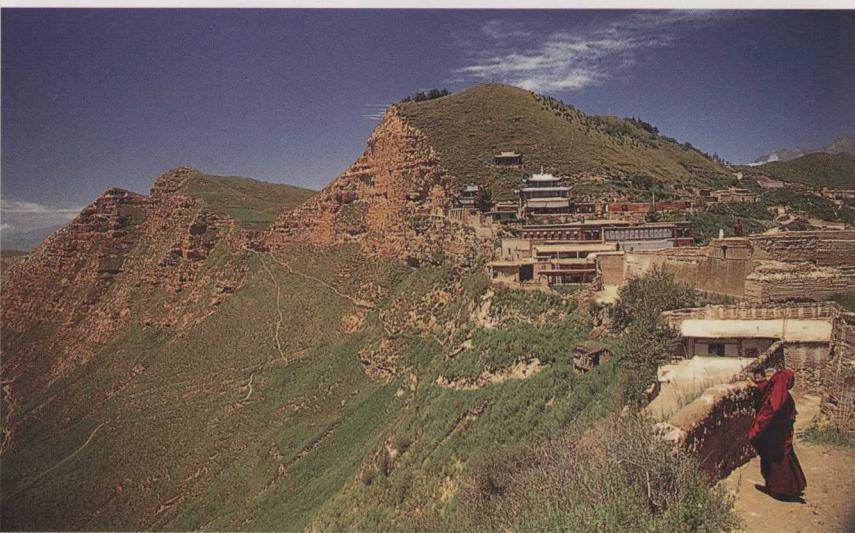
51. Panoramic view of the sandstone crag Martsang Drag and the temple Baima Si



52. Temple halls of
Baima Si



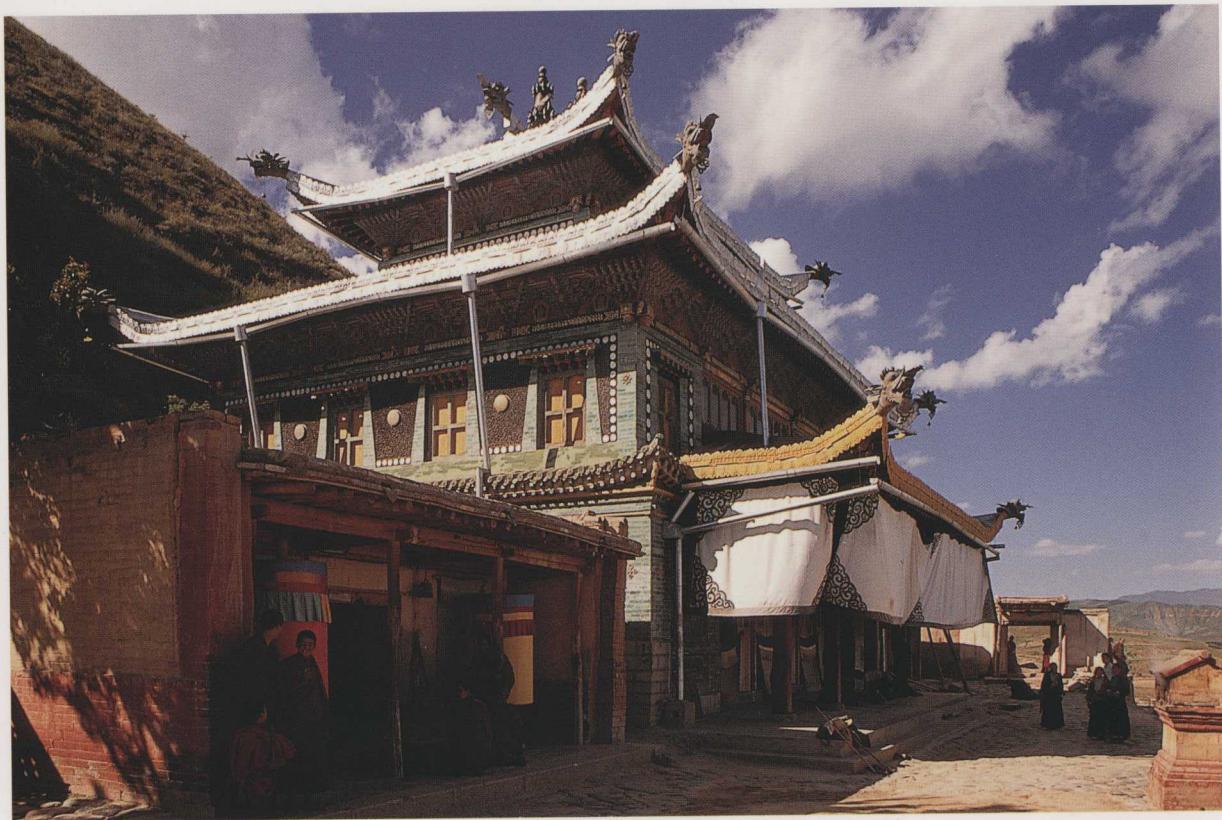
53. Martsang Drag's rock
image of Maitreya



54. Shyachung Monastery
overlooks a steep cliff high
above the Yellow River



55. Residential buildings and temple halls extend over the main ridge and the eastern slope of Shyachung Mountain



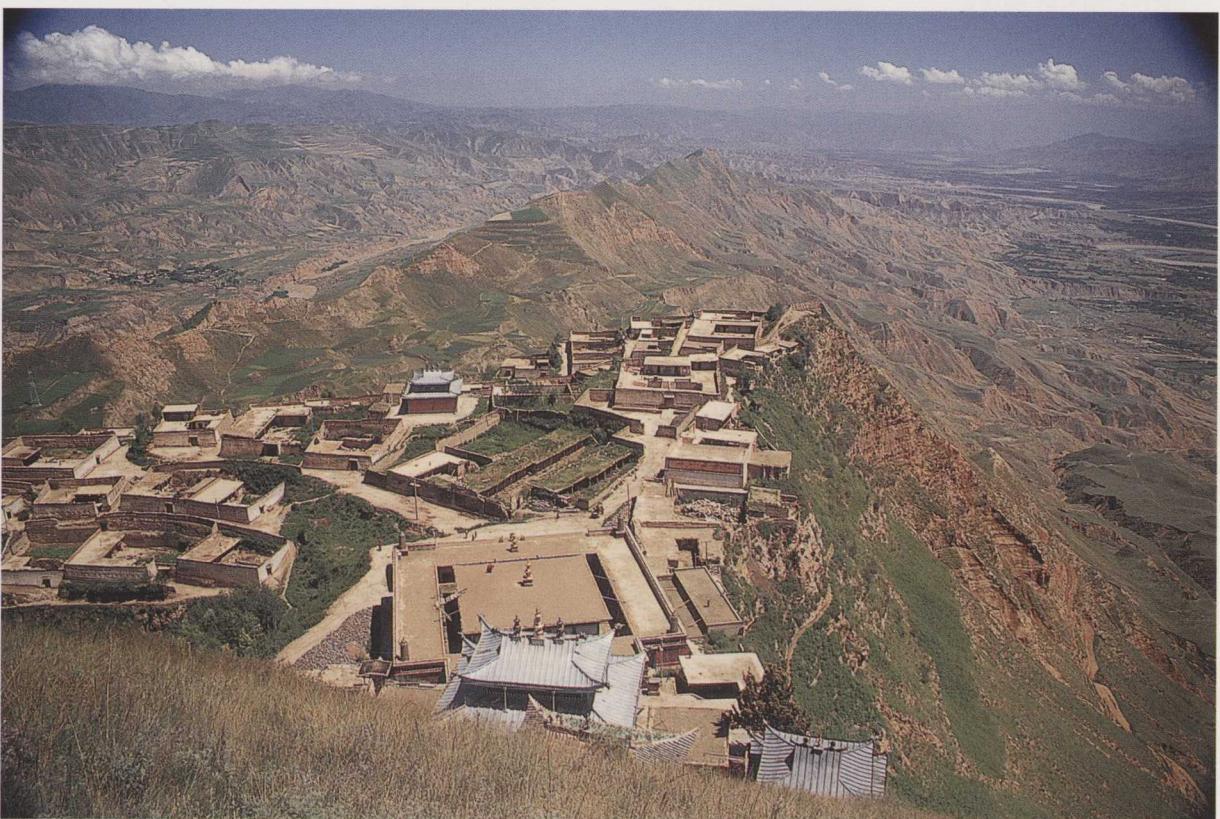
56. Tsongkhapa Lhakhang



57. Mural of Maitreya in the Hall of Maitreya—Jampe Lhakhang



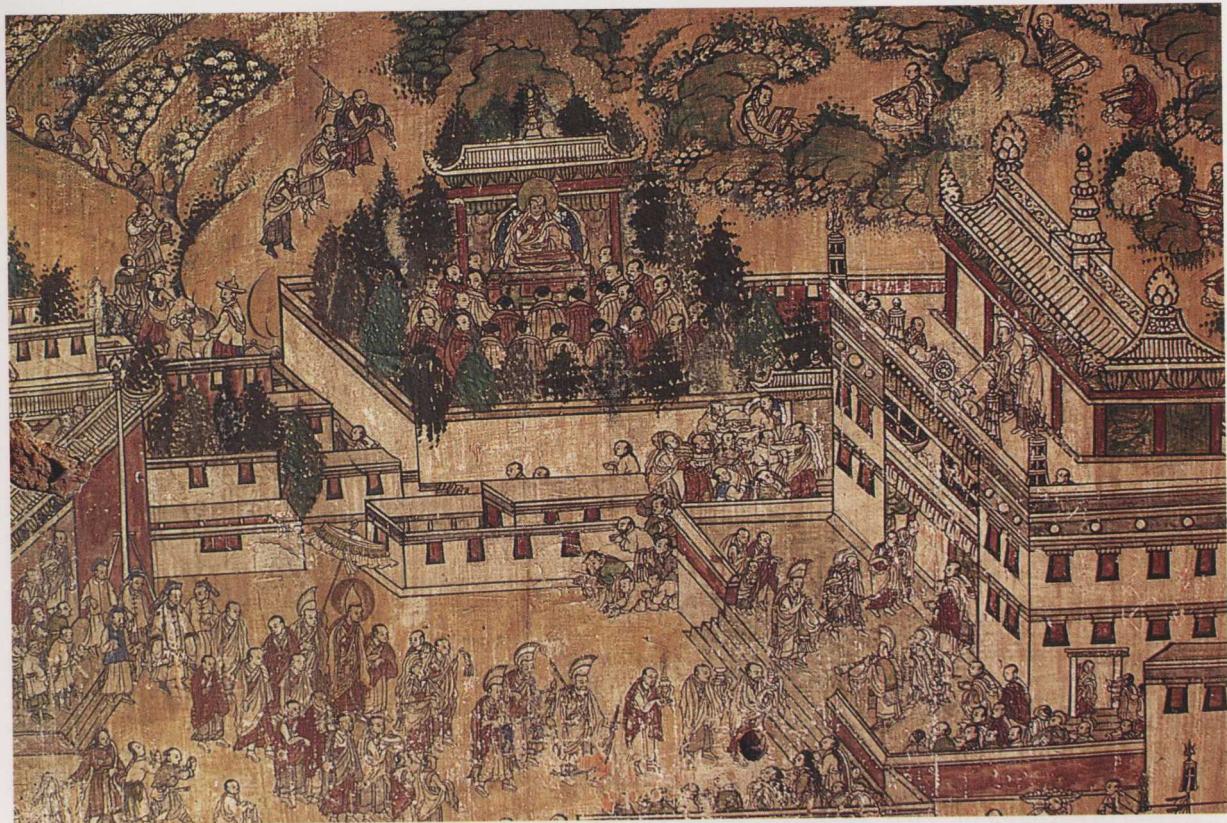
58. The main image of Jampe Lhakhang is this bronze statue of Maitreya



59. Panoramic view of Shyachung Monastery and its surroundings

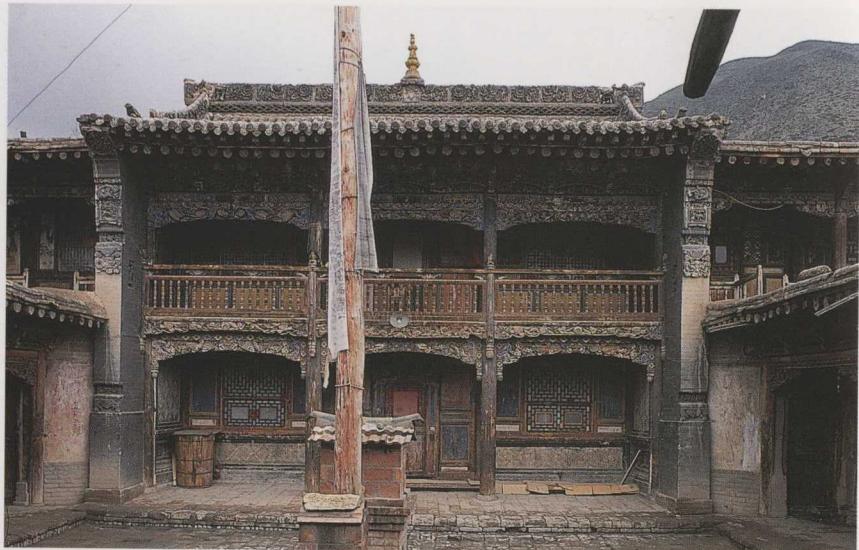


60. Chubsang Gompa's main assembly hall



61. Mural of the tulku's residence on wood in a side hall which escaped destruction, Chubsang Gompa

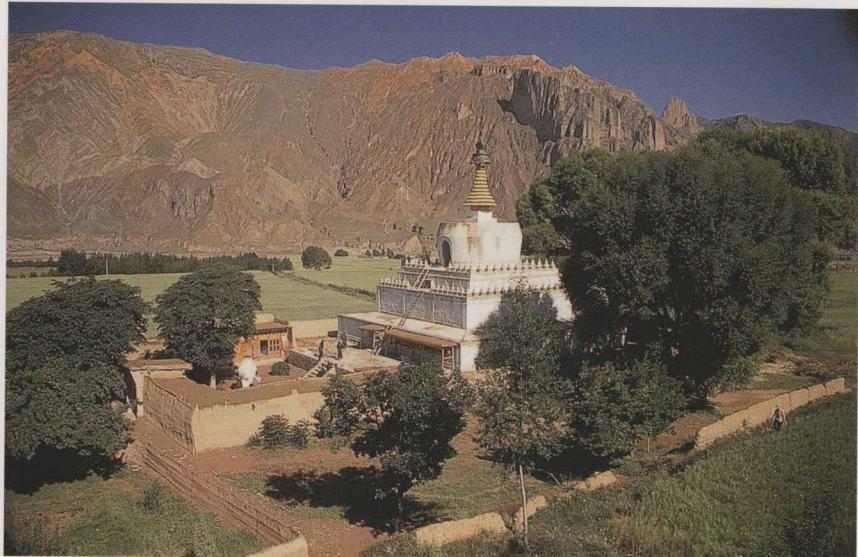
62. An older hall beside Tongkhor Gompa's assembly hall possesses some elaborate wood-carvings

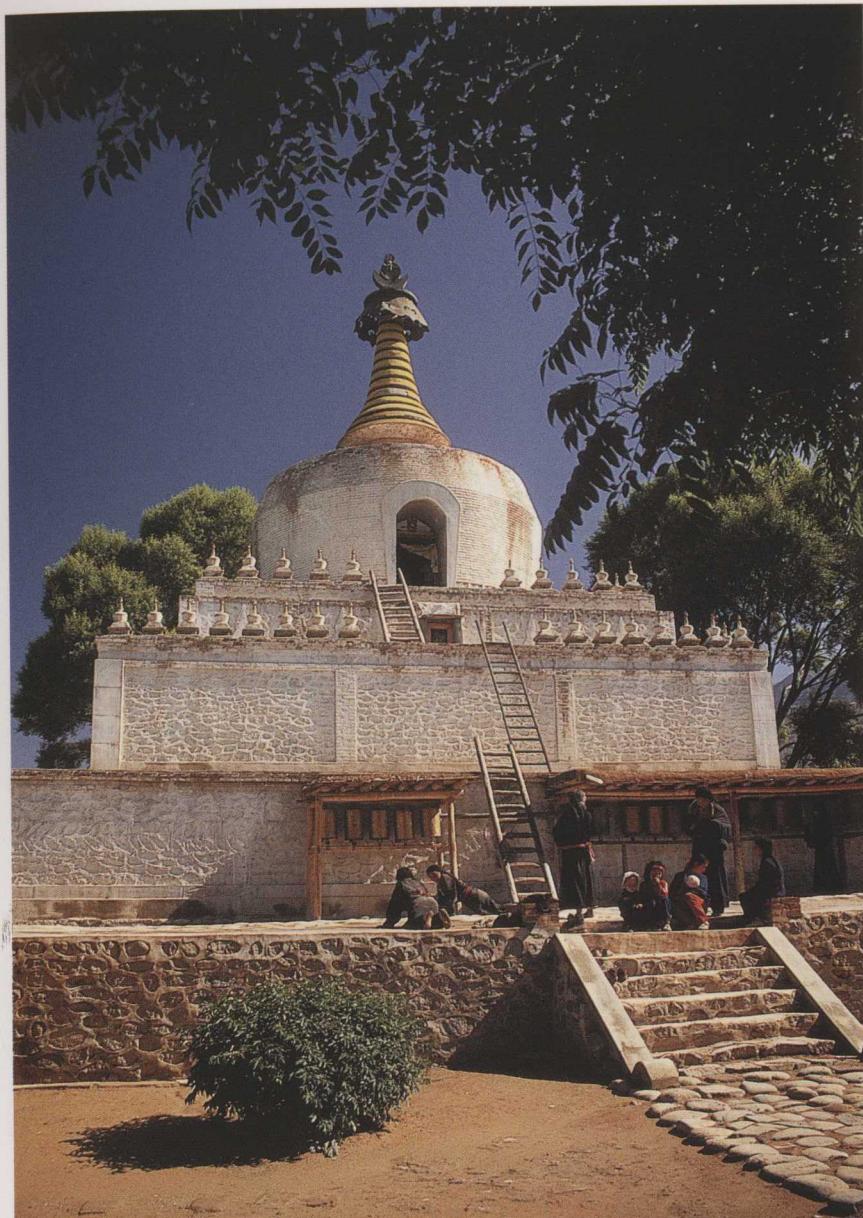


63. Tongkhor Gompa: one of the numerous prayer-wheels around the main hall

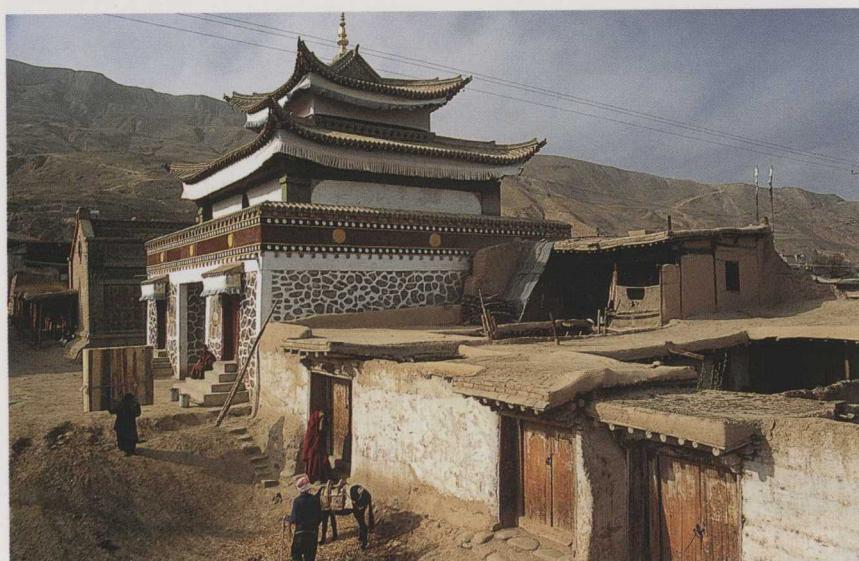


64. Leaving the Yellow River gorge, travelling southwards, this large white chörten is the first sight in a panoramic view of the Rongwo valley

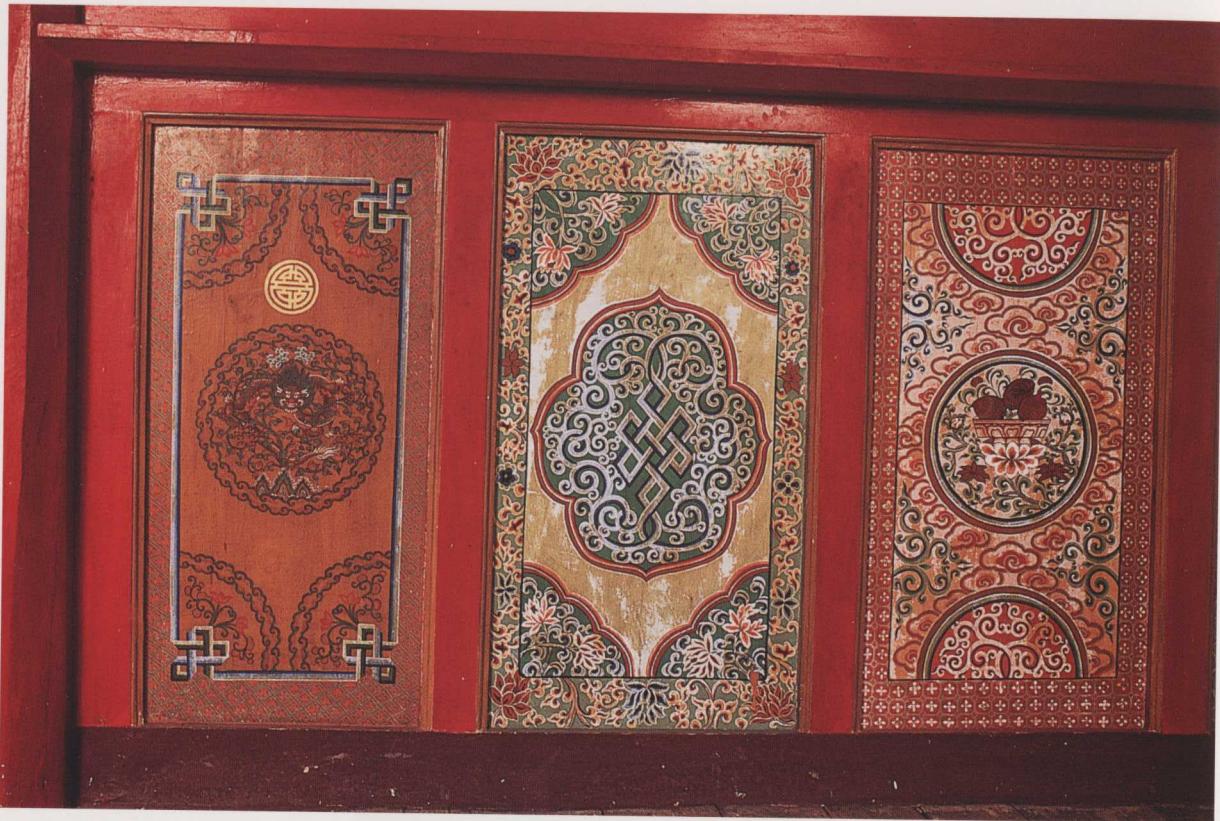




65. Close-up of the white chörten, Rongwo valley



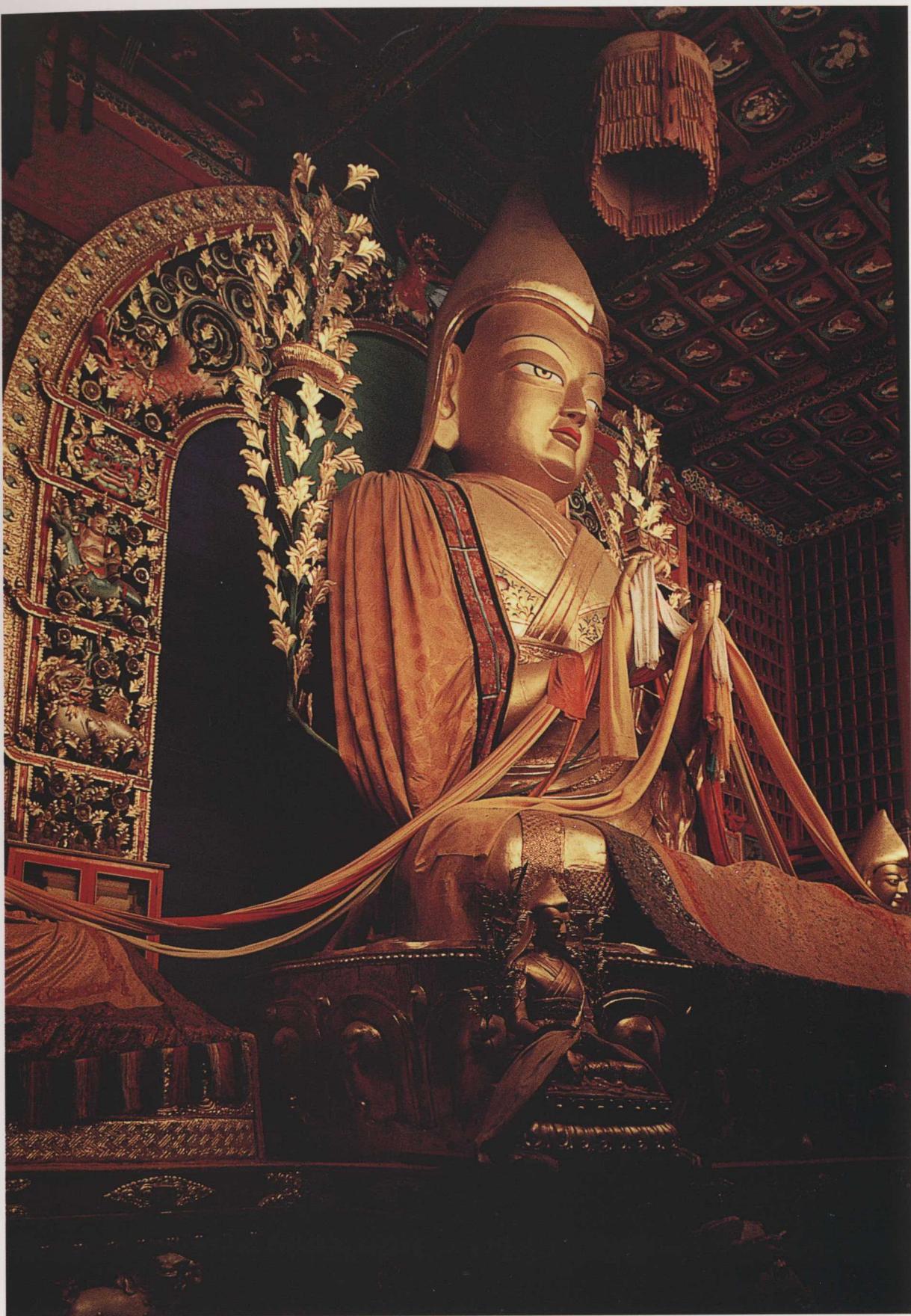
66. Gate chörten of Rongwo Gönchen



67. Painted wooden panels, Rongwo Gönchen

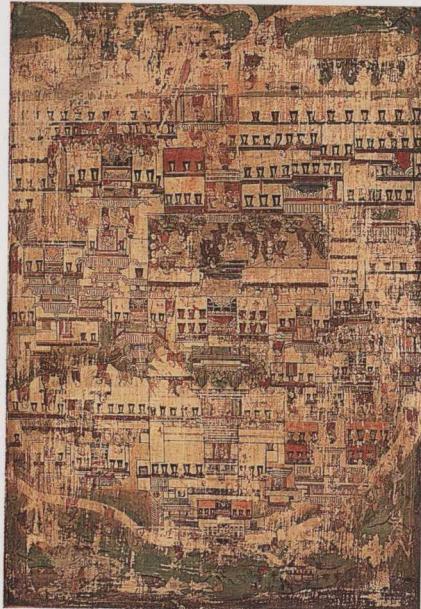
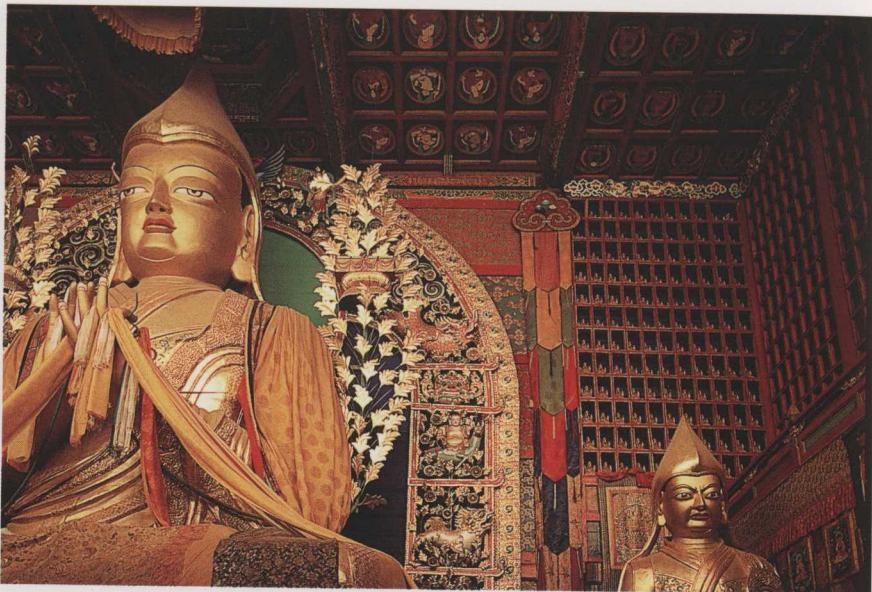


68. Tsuglakhang, Rongwo Gönchen



69. Large Tsongkhapa statue in the main assembly hall—Tsuglakhang

70. Main assembly hall—
Tsuglakhang—with
Tsongkhapa statue

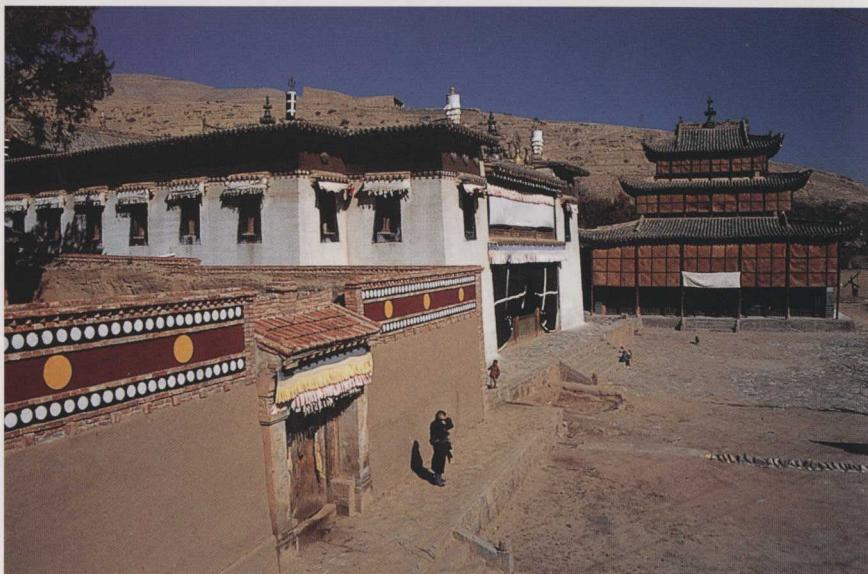
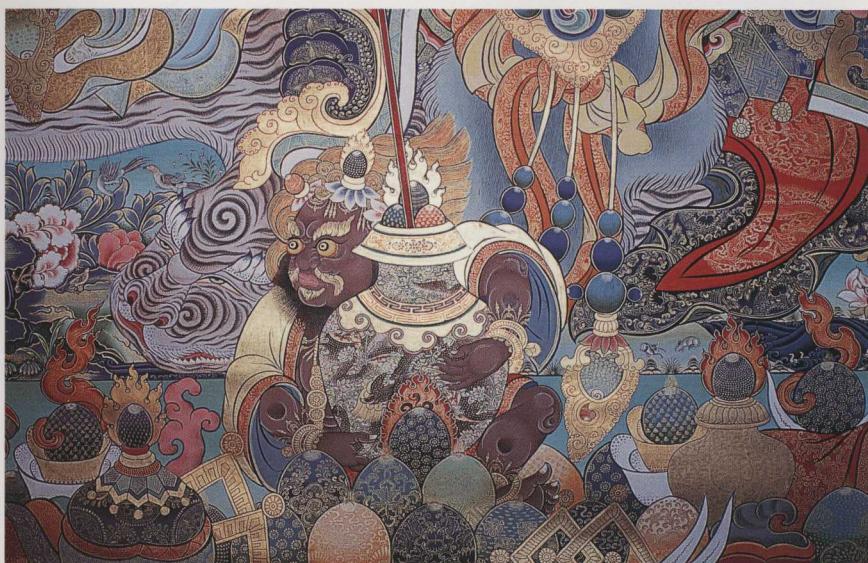
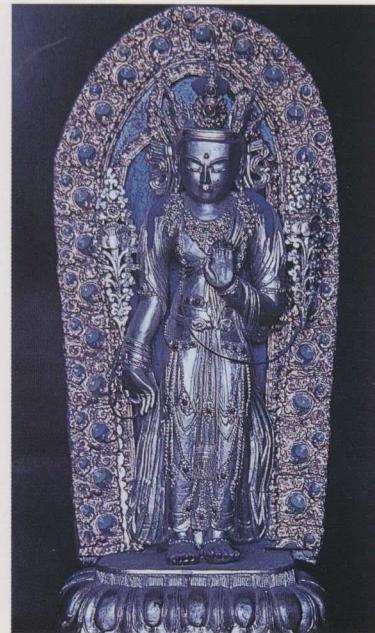


71. Painting on wood on the
upper floor of Sedgye Dratshang
famous Tibetan lamaseries,
here Rongwo Gönchen

72. Shakyamuni Hall of the
upper Wutun Monastery
(Yago Gompa)



73. This Qing dynasty statue, carved of wood, gilded and adorned with precious stones, belongs to the treasures of Wutun Si

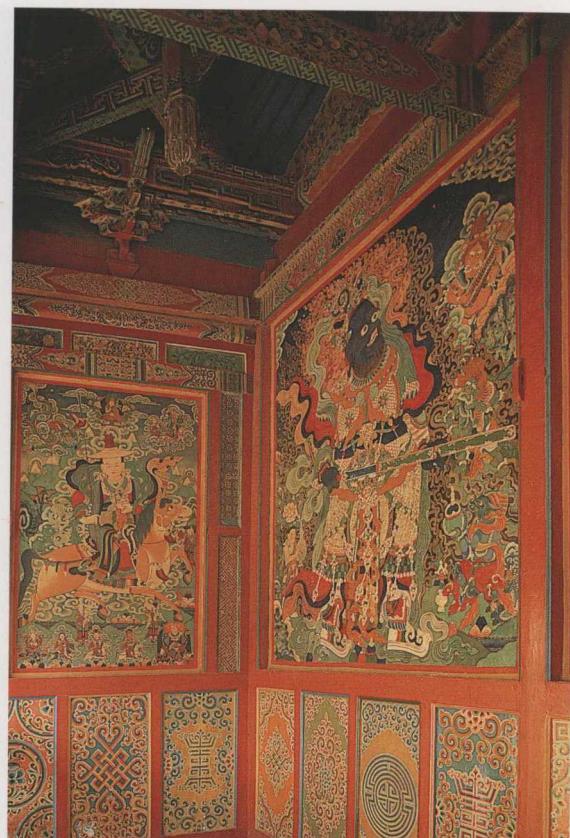


74. Details of a mural in the vestibule of Mago Gompa's assembly hall

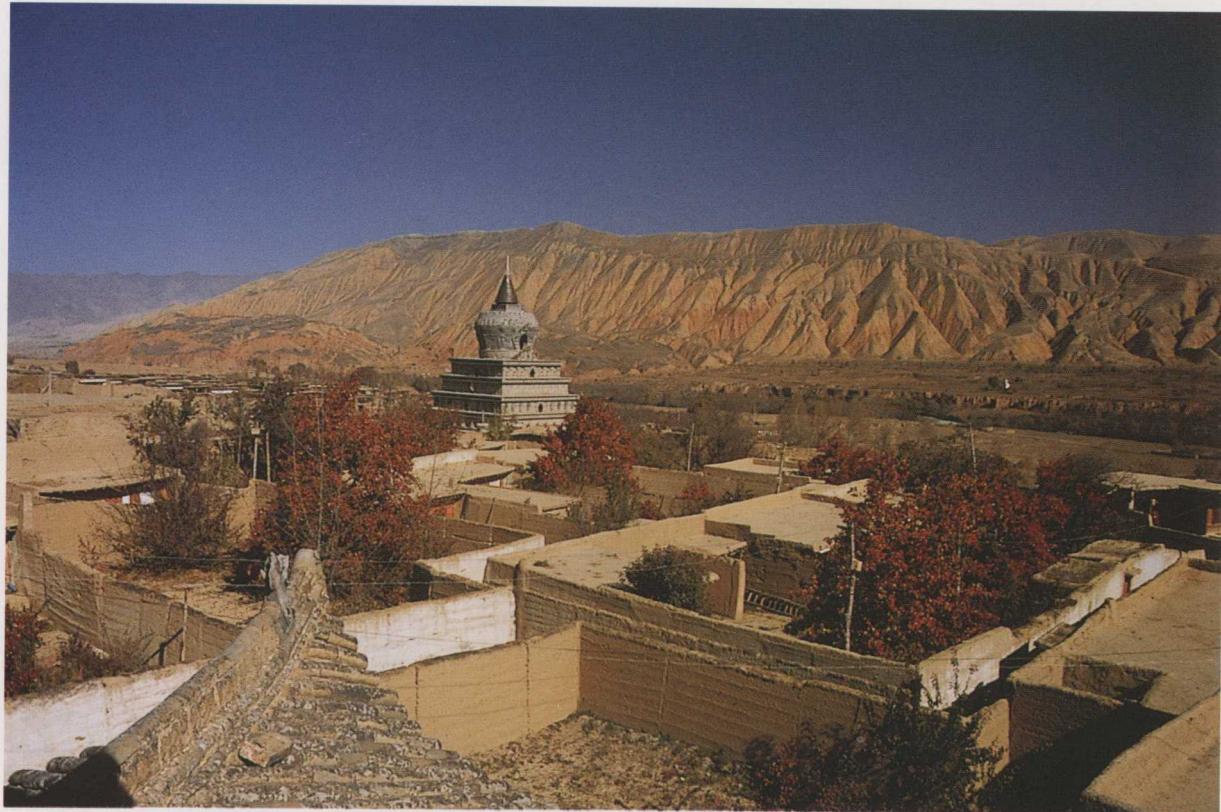
75. Assembly hall and Maitreya temple of Nyenthog Monastery



76. Shambhala mural in the vestibule of the dukhang of Nyenthog Monastery



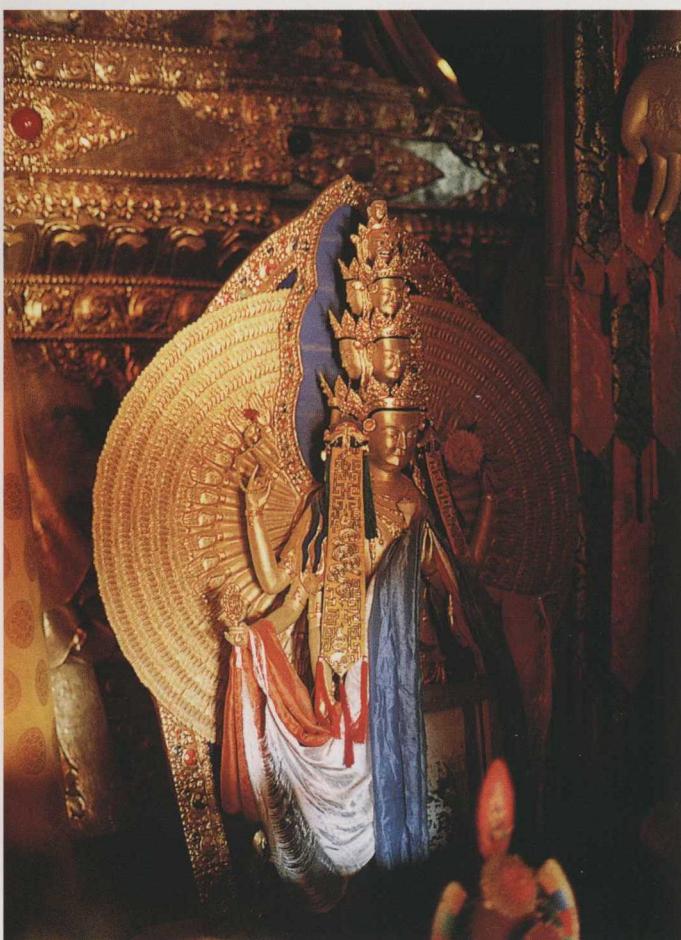
77. Freshly painted lokapalas at the Maitreya temple's entrance of Nyenthog Monastery



78. View of Gomar Monastery's Gomar Chörten



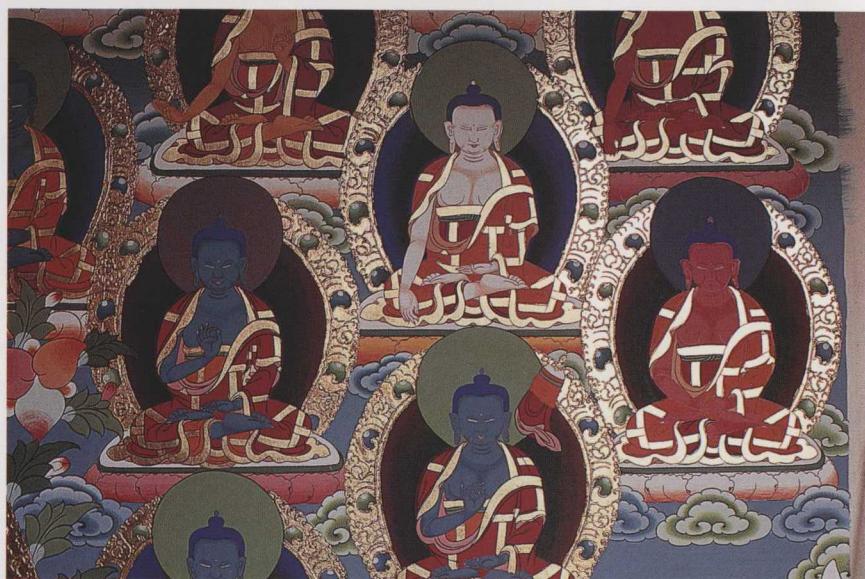
79. The large Maitreya image in Jampe Lhakhang of Gomar Gompa



80. A 1000-armed Avalokiteshvara inside the Maitreya temple of Gomar Gompa



81. Painter Gyamtsho
of Wutun village



82.-83. Fine examples
of present-day Rebgong painting



84. Fine examples of present-day Rebgong painting



85. An example of Rebgong bronze art—the Jowo statue of Yago Gompa



86. Rebgong panel decoration



87. A typical door decoration
in Rongwo valley

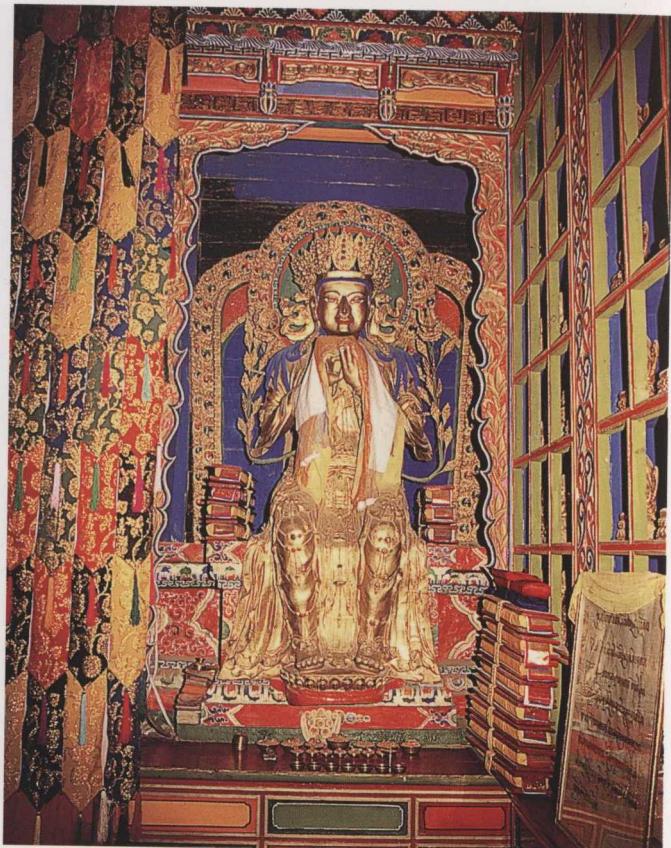


88. View of Gori Dratshang monastery

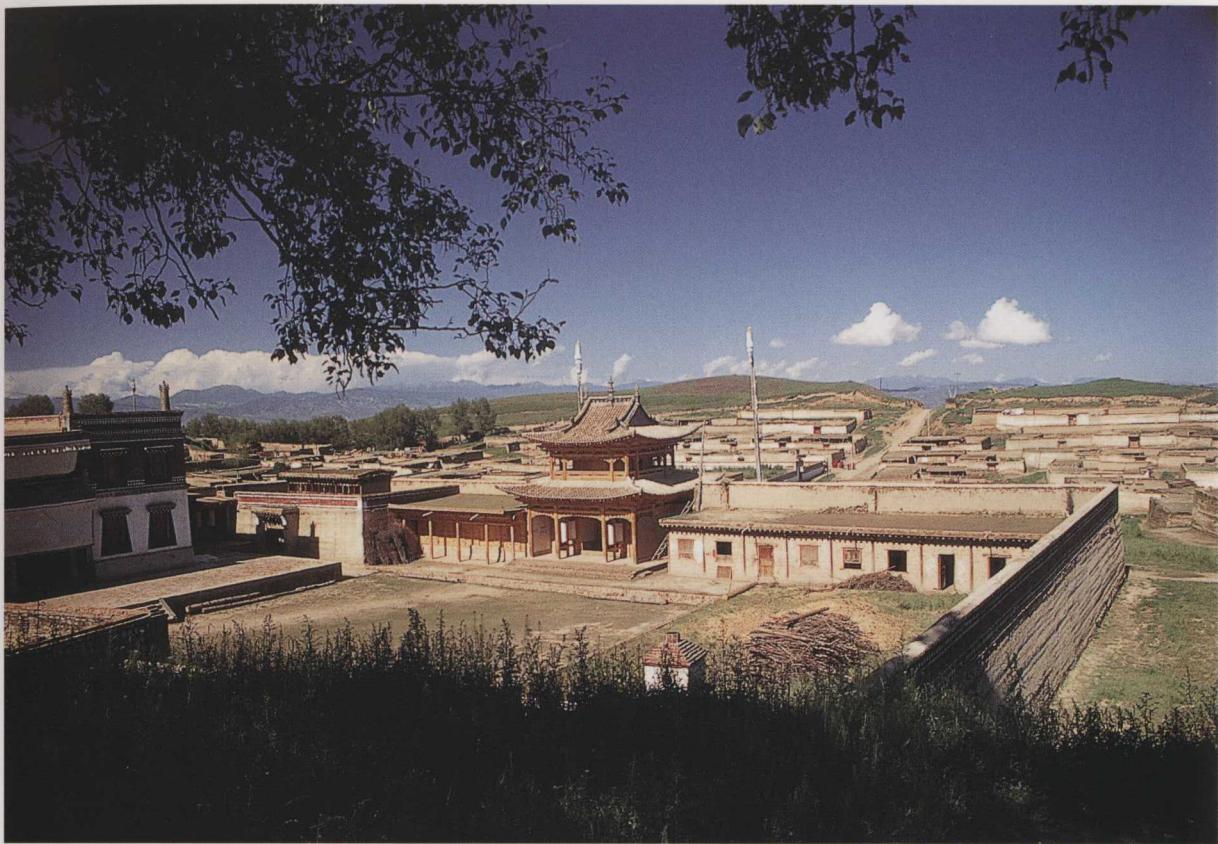


89. Burial stupa of Sherab Gyatsho (1883-1968) inside the so-called 'Bell Tower', which commemorates this noted buddhologist and lama

90. 'Bell Tower': large Maitreya image



91. The World Peace stupa of the nunnery Dama Jomo Gompa

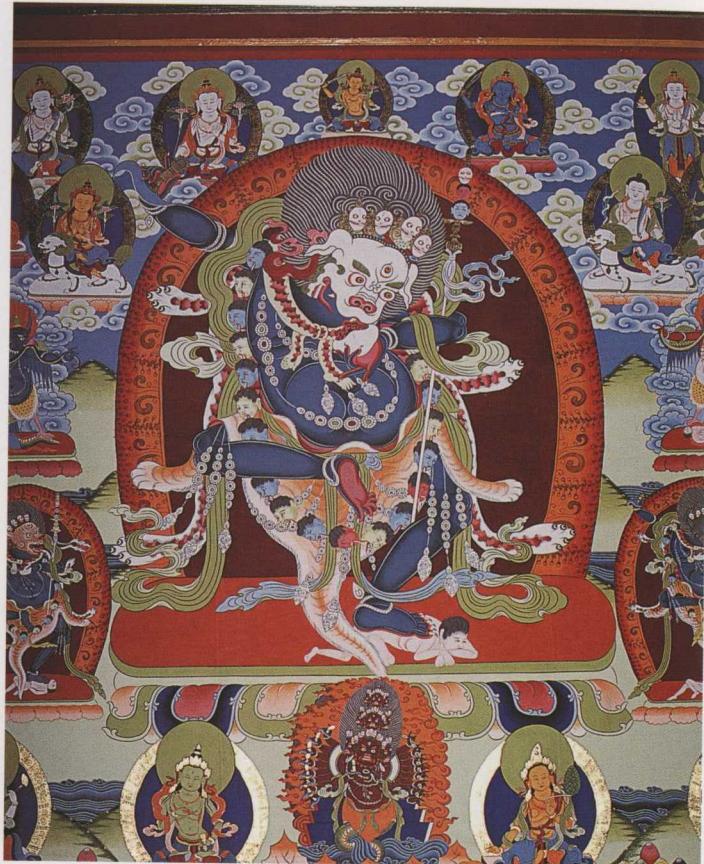


92. Main courtyard, Lamo Dechen Monastery



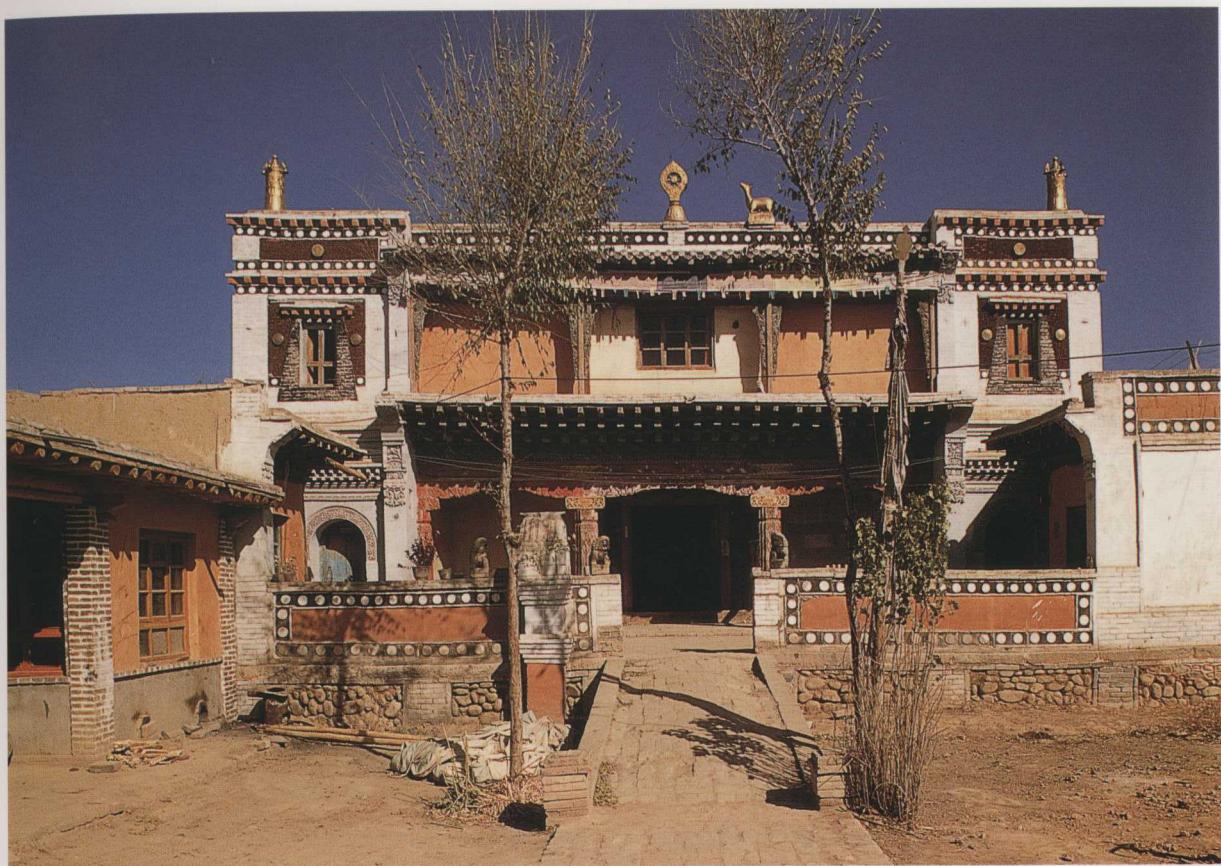
93. Mural in Lamo Dechen's main assembly hall: the 'lords of the burial grounds'

94. Mural in Lamo Dechen's main assembly hall: Yama



95. Mural of Lamo Dechen's main assembly hall: Yamantaka

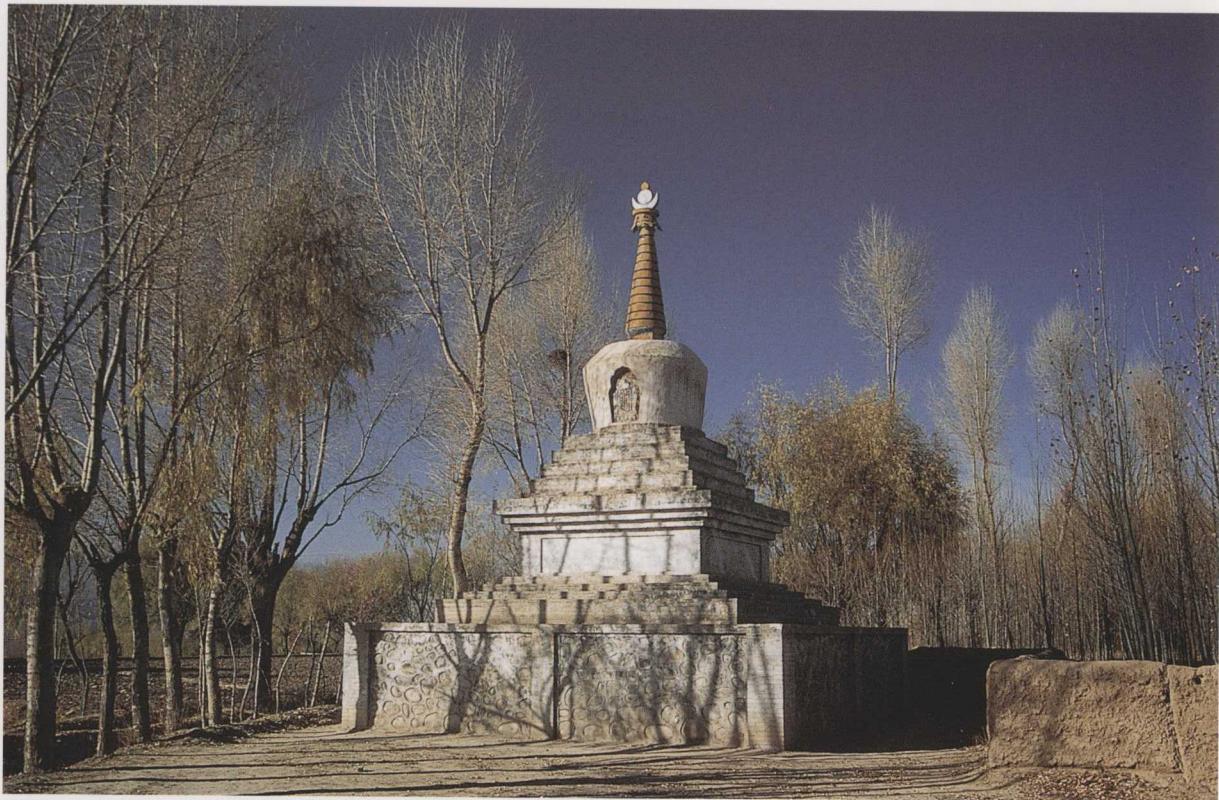




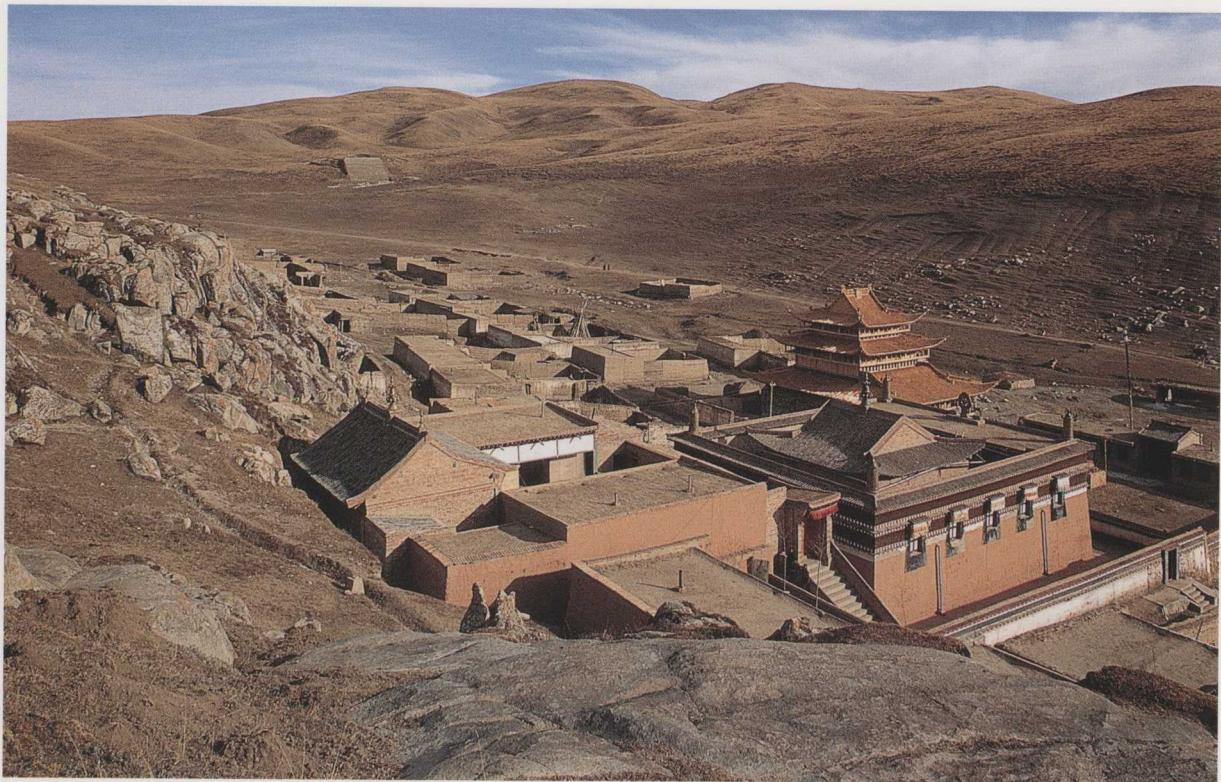
96. Dukhang (assembly hall), Minyag Dratshang



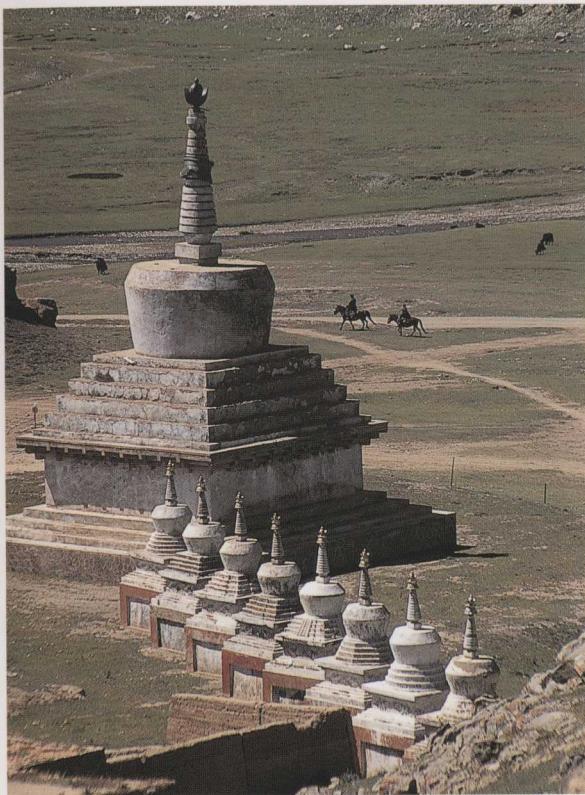
97. New moulded stucco image of a tutelary deity, Minyag Dratshang



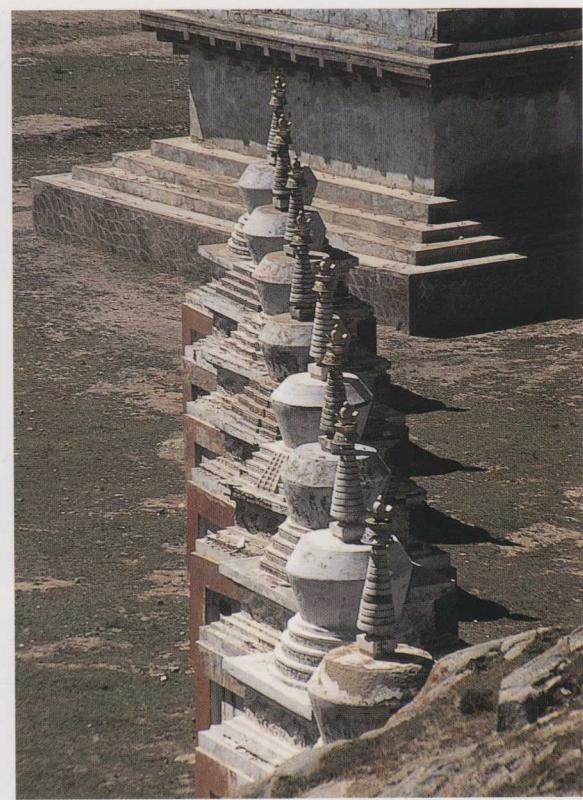
98. A chörten at the entrance to Gongba Dratshang near Guide



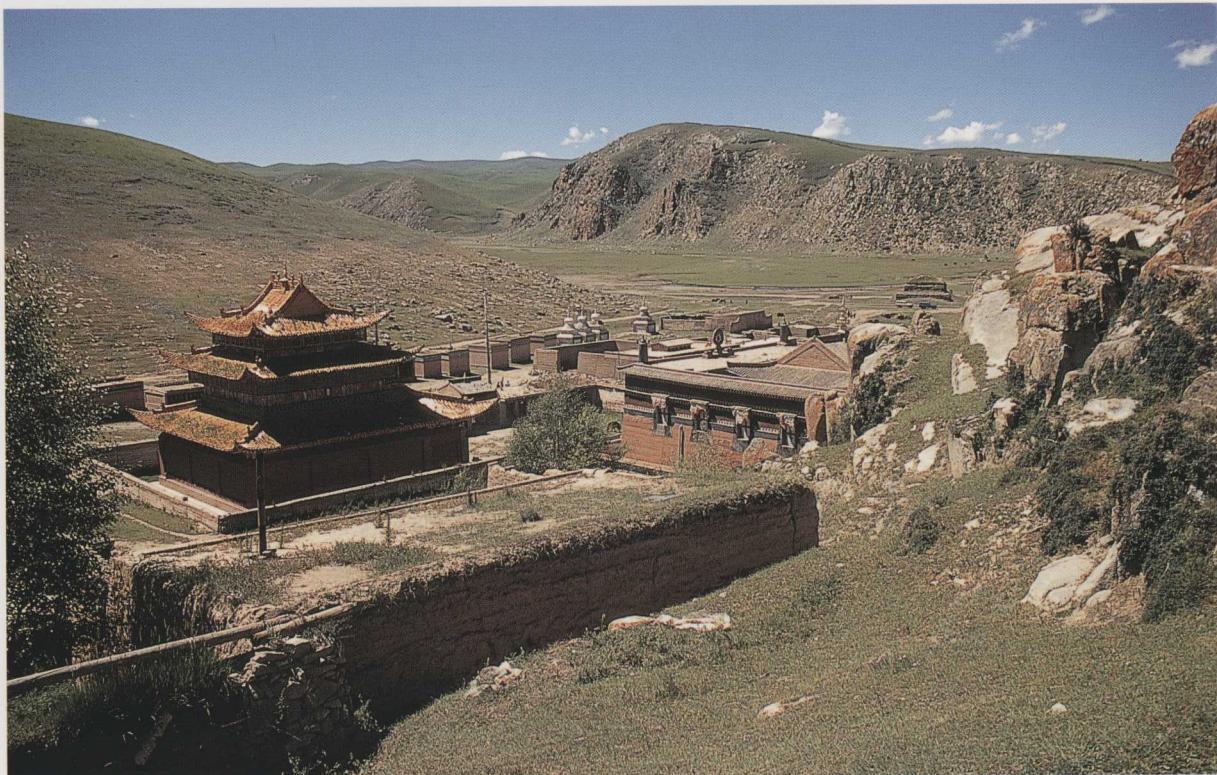
99. A panoramic view of Hor Gompa



100. A row of white chörten near the roadside marks the entrance to Hor Monastery's complex



101. Another view of the Hor Gompa's row of chörten



102. The hall of Padmasambhava is topped by Chinese-style hipped roofs; the assembly hall has typical Tibetan flat-roof architecture



103. The monumental statue of Padmasambhava is flanked by two Chinese dragons

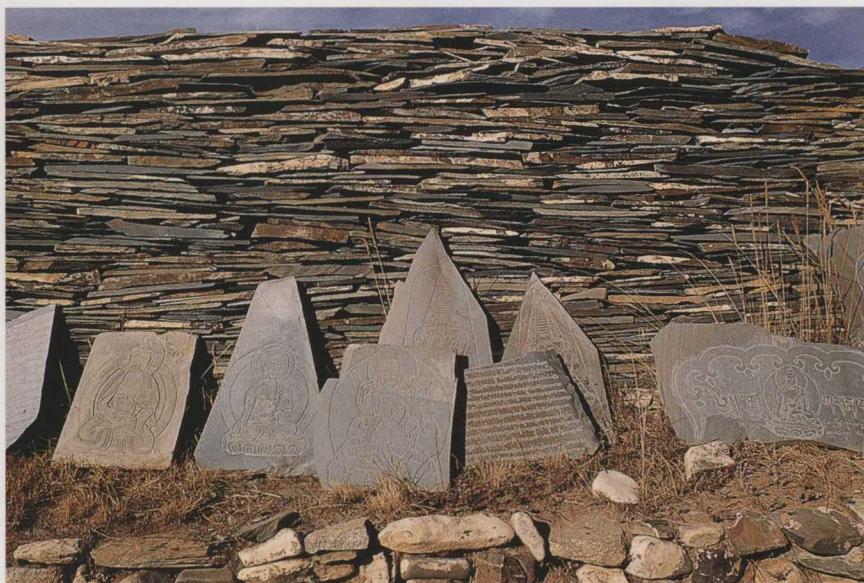
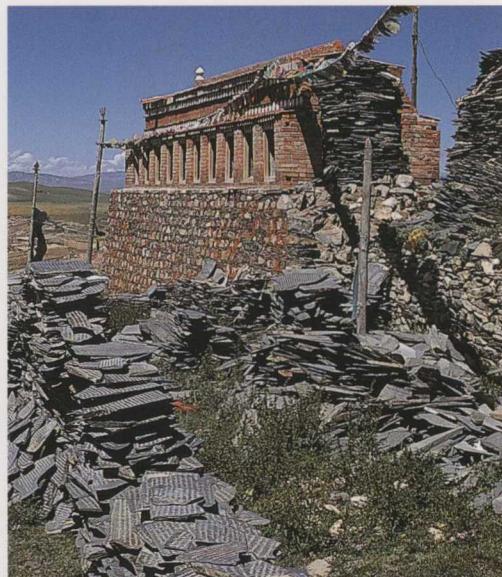


104. The sutra walls of Hor



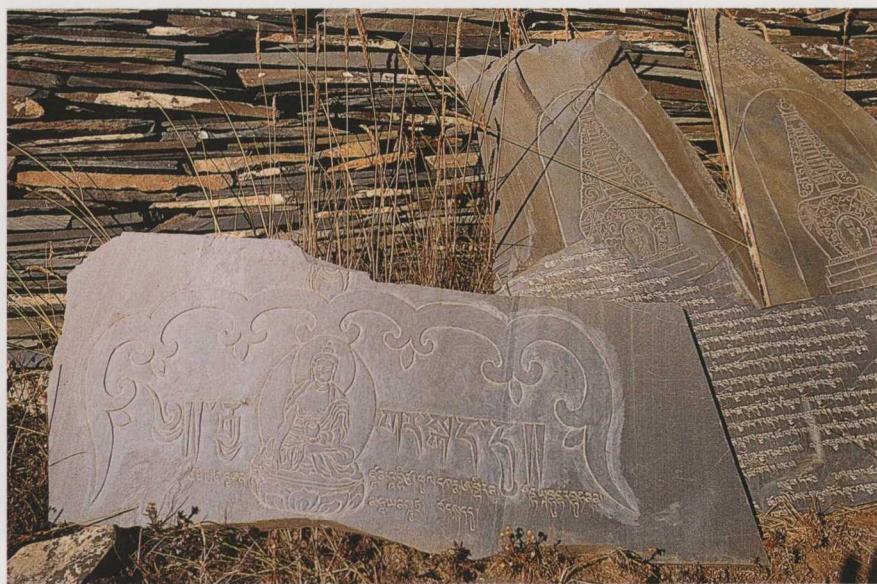
105. Another view of the sutra walls

106. Another view of the sutra walls

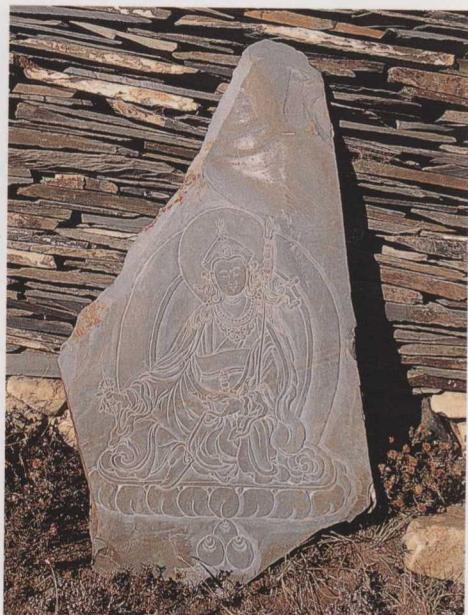


107. Some individual examples of the stone carvings on Hor's sutra walls

108. Further example of the stone carvings on the sutra walls



109. Stone carvings on Hor's sutra walls



110. The Amnye Machen range's main peak Machen Kangri viewed from the southwest



111. Painting of the mountain god Machen Pomra (a mural of Guri Gompa)



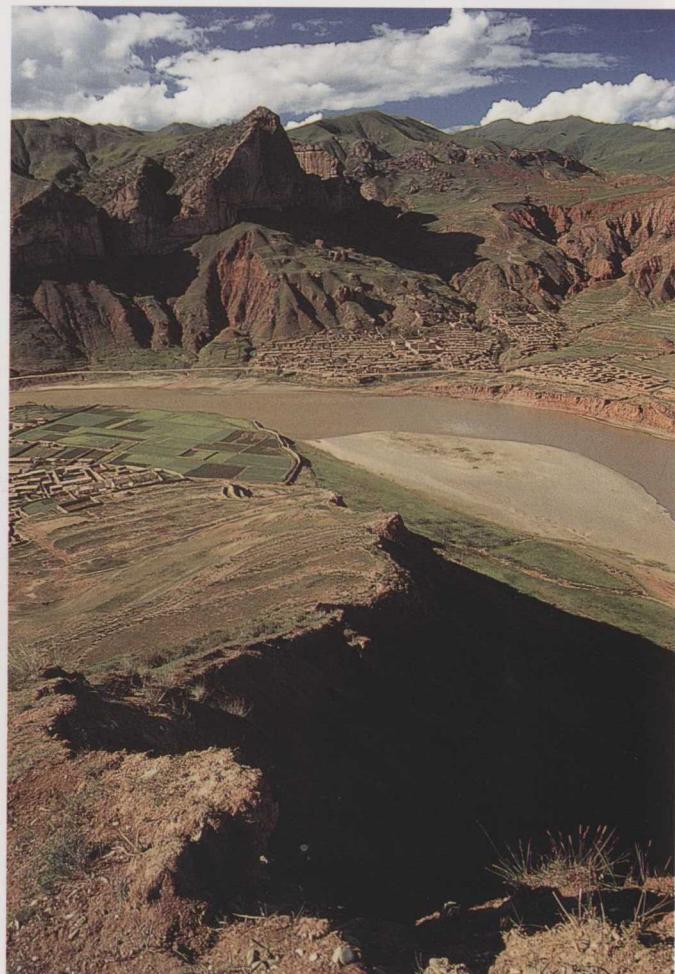
112. A lhatsa on the pass Drakdo Latse Chogon (4328 m) on the Amnye Machen Parikrama



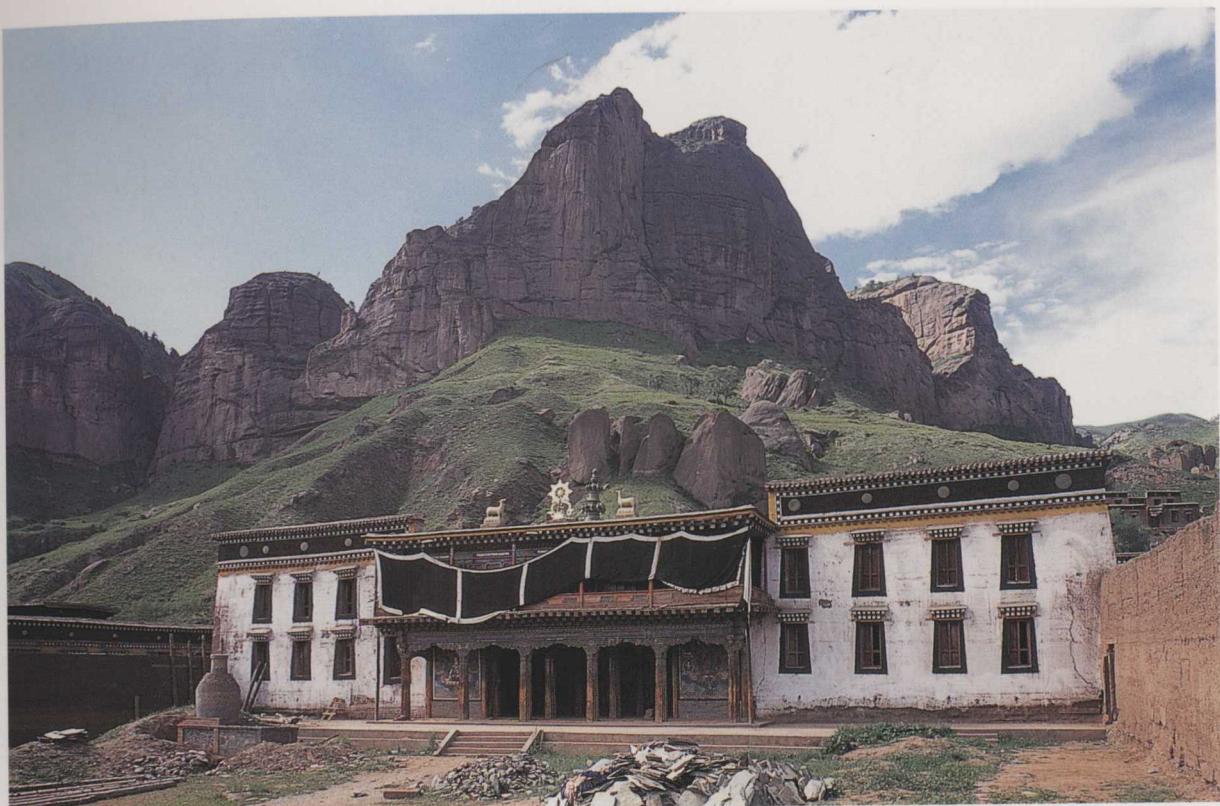
113. A monk pilgrim circumambulating the Amnye Machen mountain by prostrating



114. A large tshatsha depicting a dakini in Guri Gompa



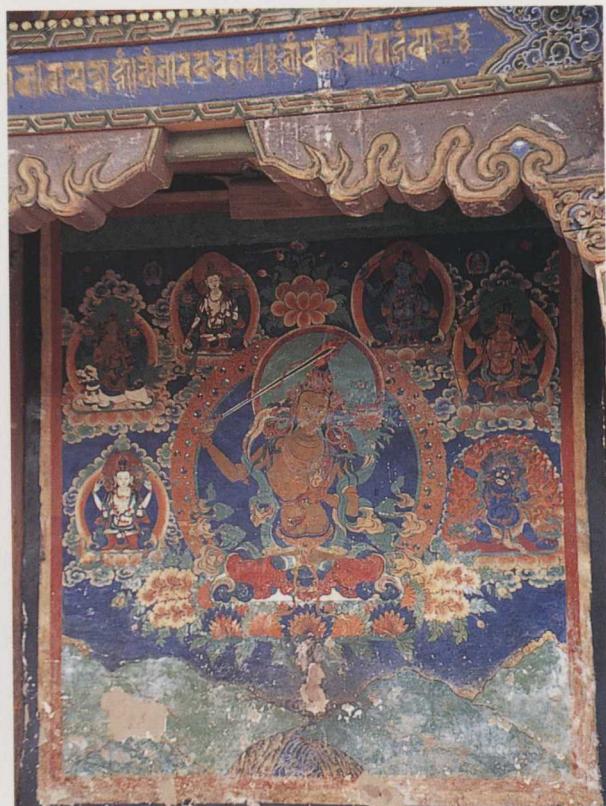
115. A panoramic view of Ragya Monastery, the sacred Mt. Amnye Chungngön and the Yellow River gorge



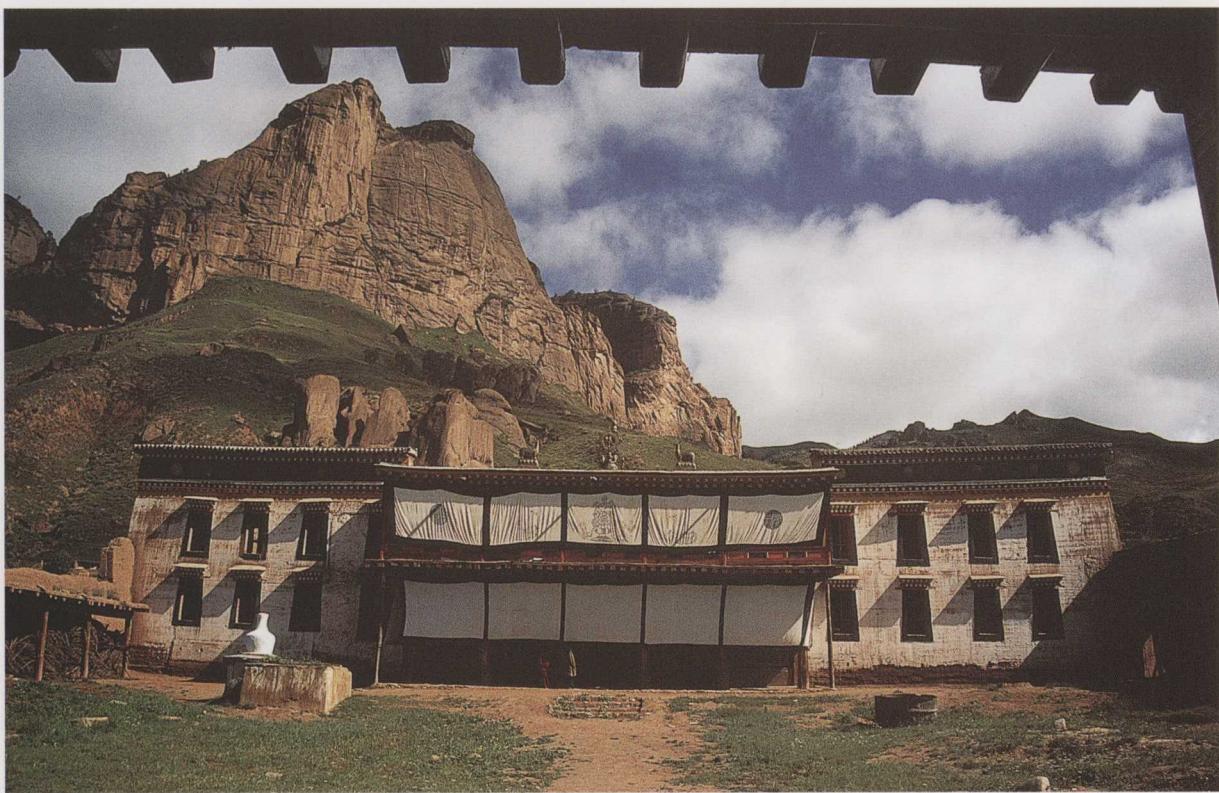
116. Main assembly hall of Ragya Gompa



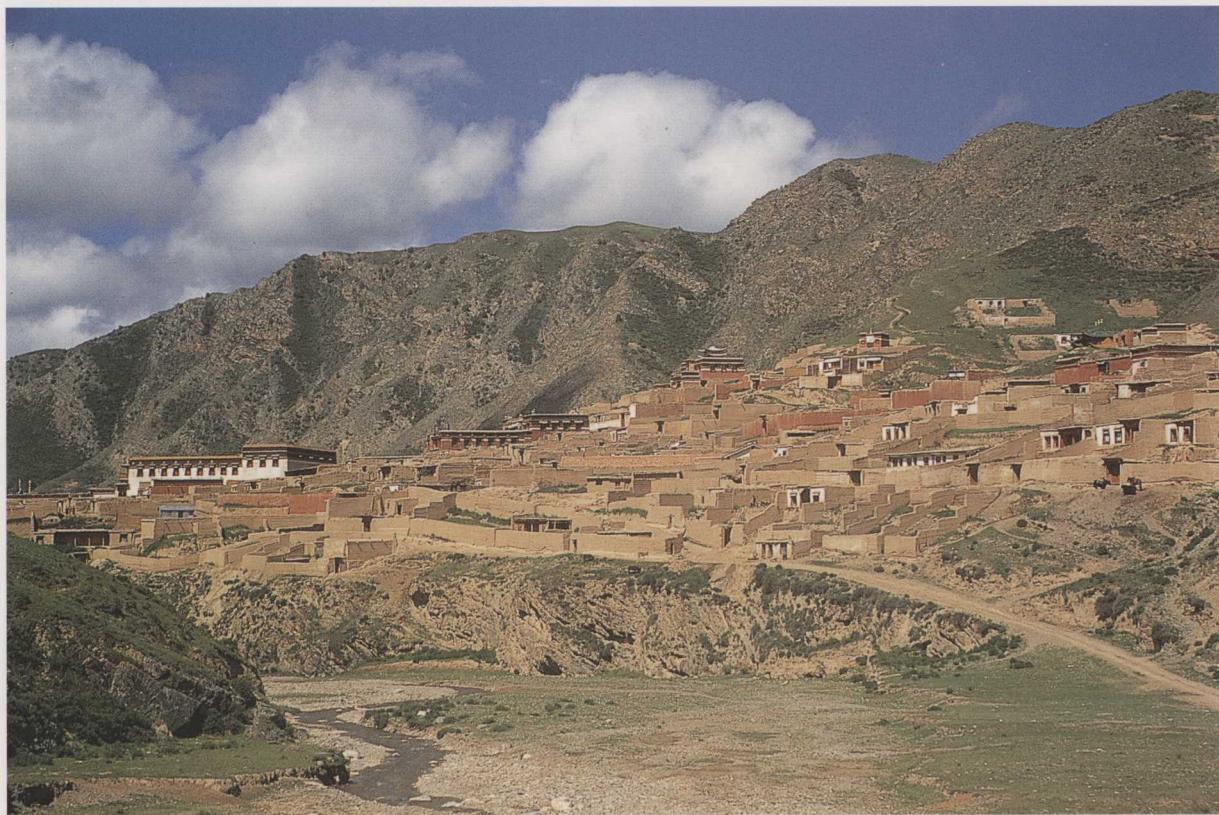
117. Old mural presumably depicting Machen Pomra in his celestial palace



118. Another mural of the pre-1959 period in the vestibule of Ragya Gompa's dukhang, depicting Manjushri and other bodhisattvas



119. The large assembly hall extends at the foot of rugged Mt. Amnye Chungngön; the sacred mountain is the residence of Ragya Gompa's protector deity



120. Complete view of Tsanggar Monastery



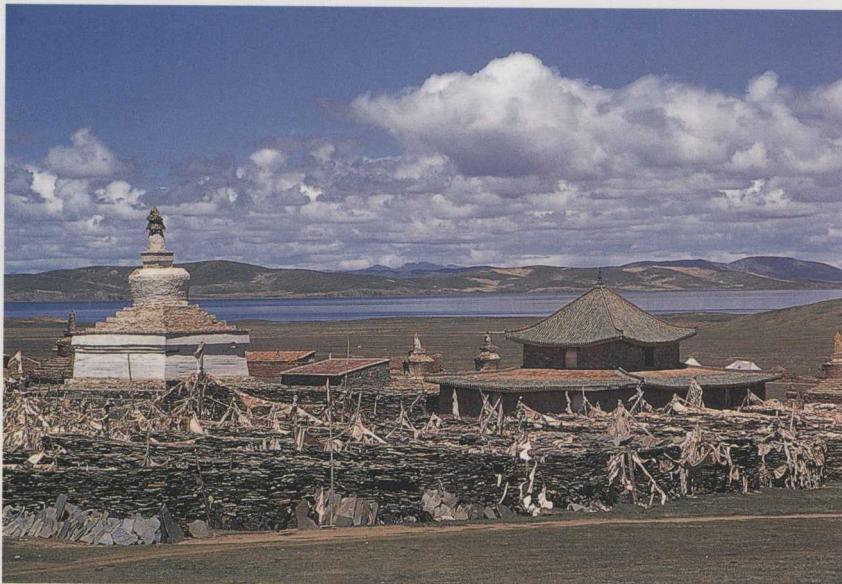
121. Main altar of the
Tsanggar Monastery's
dukhang



122. A Mongol yurt in
Sogwo Arig



123. Lakha Gompa

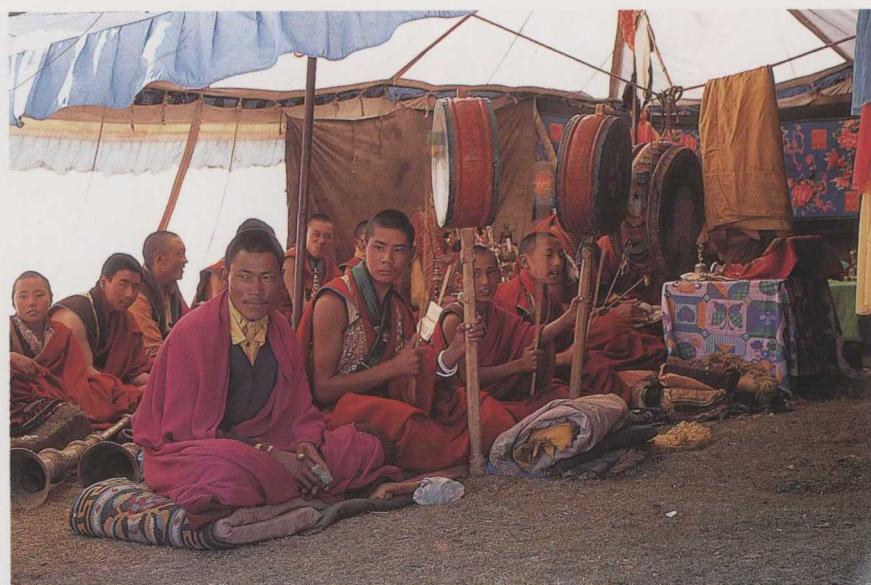


124. Panoramic view of
Lake Ngoring and the site of
Tshowar Karche Dokha



126. Tent camp monastery
near the foot of Mt. Amnye
Machen

127. Inside the main tent of the tent camp monastery



128. Prayer flags at a sacrificial site southwest of Mt. Amnye Machen



129. A colourful mani stone depicting a Tibetan calendar system near Gande



130. Bronzes in the Jonangpa monastery Lungkya Gompa of Gande county



131. Bronzes in the Jonangpa monastery Lungkya Gompa (Gande county)



132. Mural of the dharmapala
Kubera, Thubten Chökhor Ling
Monastery



133. Bronze of Vajradakini, Thubten
Chökhor Ling Monastery



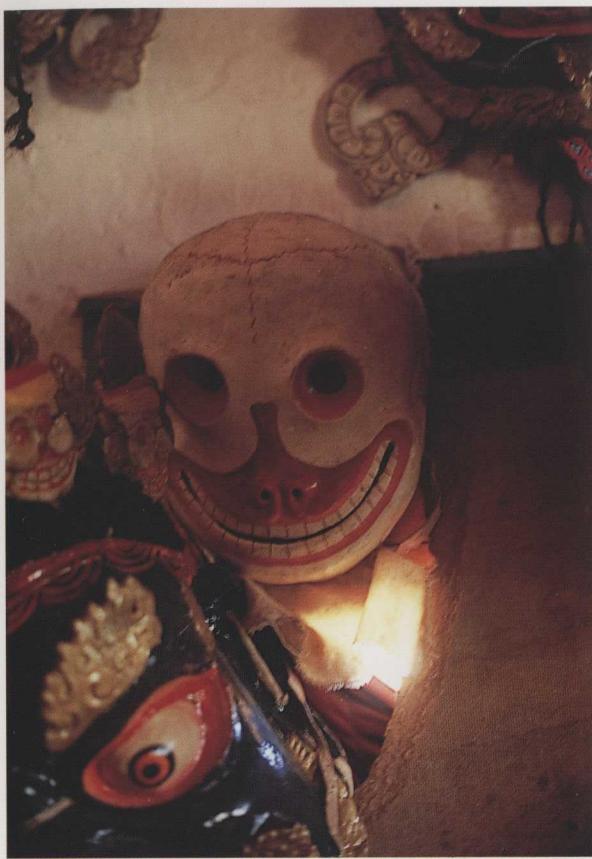
134. Paintings above the entrance of the main assembly hall, Donggyü Dokha Monastery



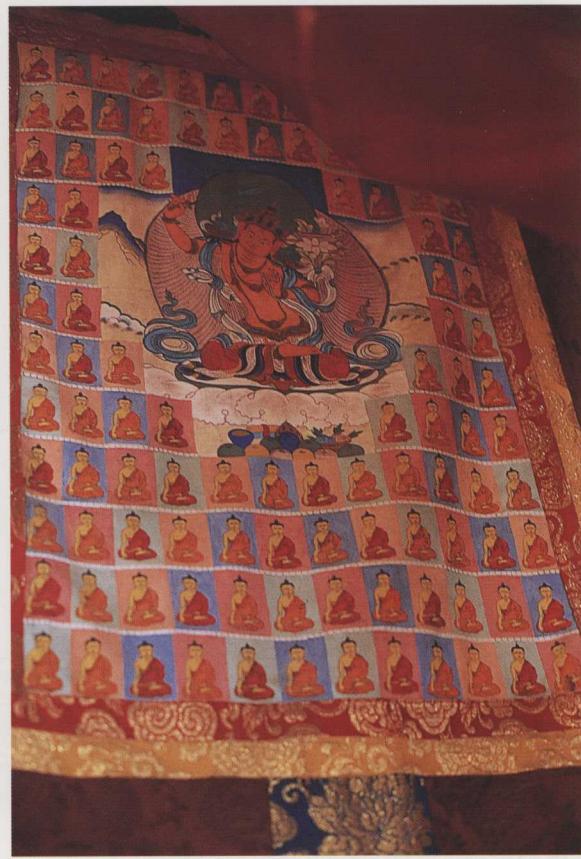
135. Maitreya is the main image inside the dukhang, Donggyü Dokha Monastery



136. Masks for the Cham dances, Donggyü Dokha Monastery



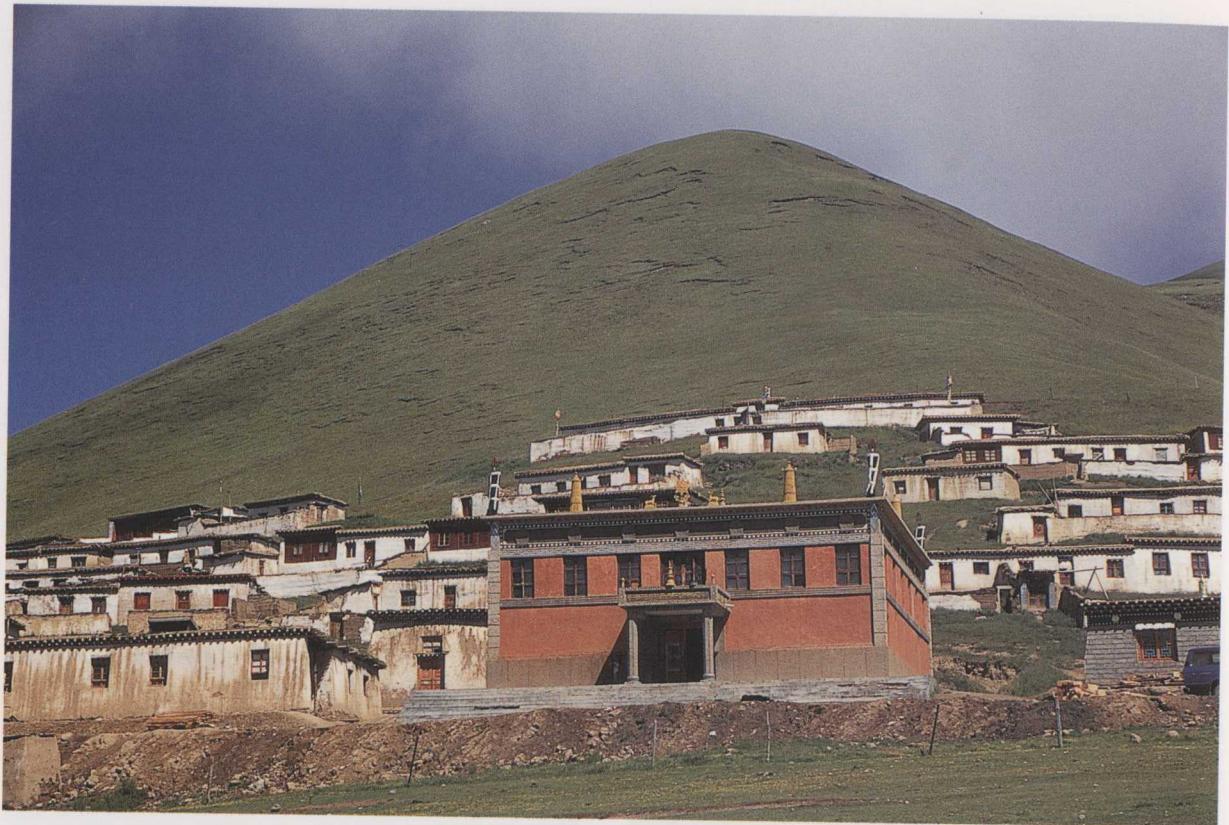
137. Masks for the Cham dances, Donggyü
Dokha Monastery



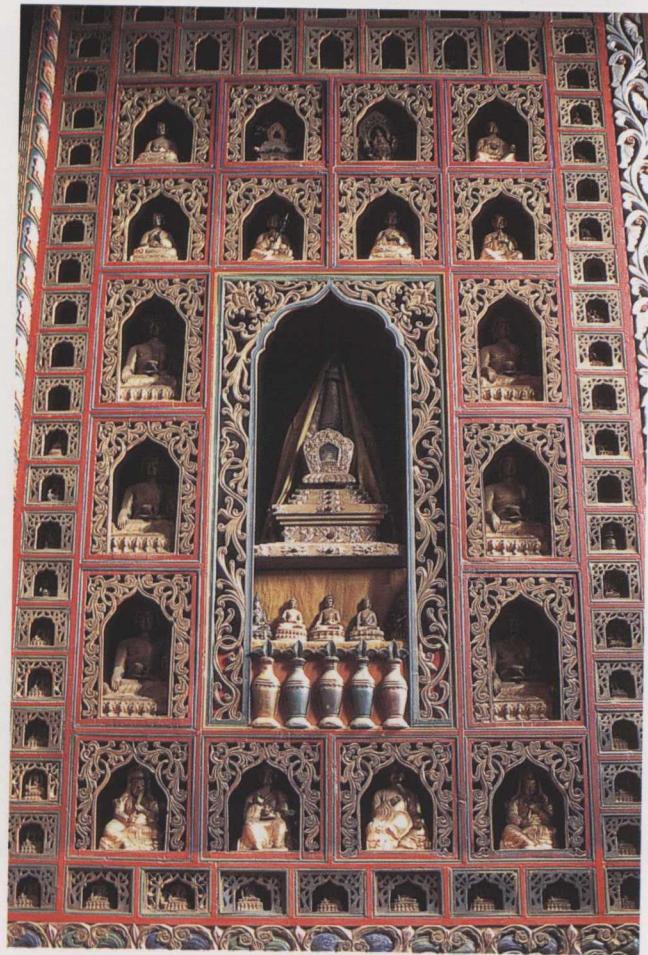
138. Thangka of Manjushri surrounded by a
hundred buddhas



139. Butter sculptures are made at
special monastic events



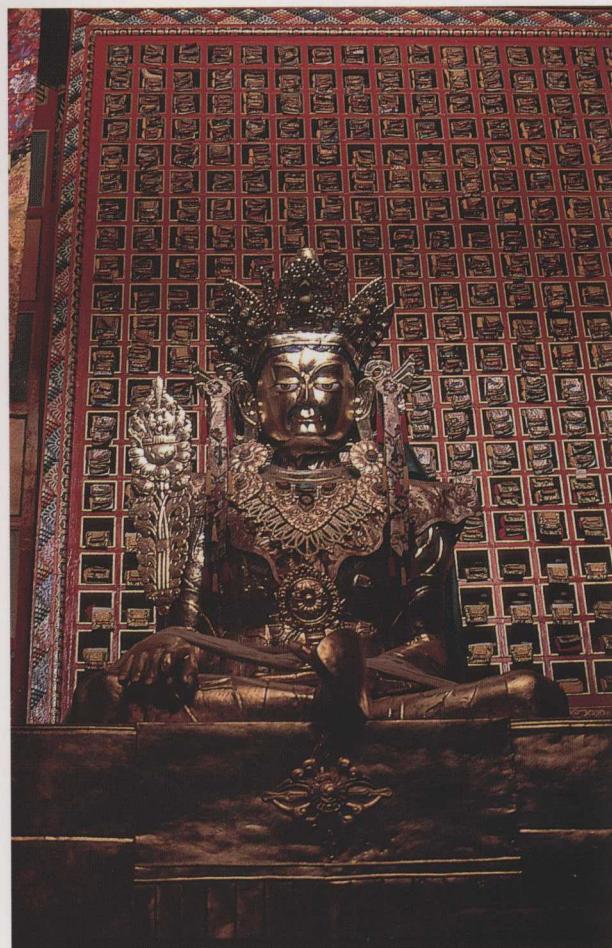
140. A panoramic view of Thraling Monastery



141. A wooden shrine inside the main assembly hall, Thraling Gön



142. A panoramic view
of Peyü Darhang Monastery



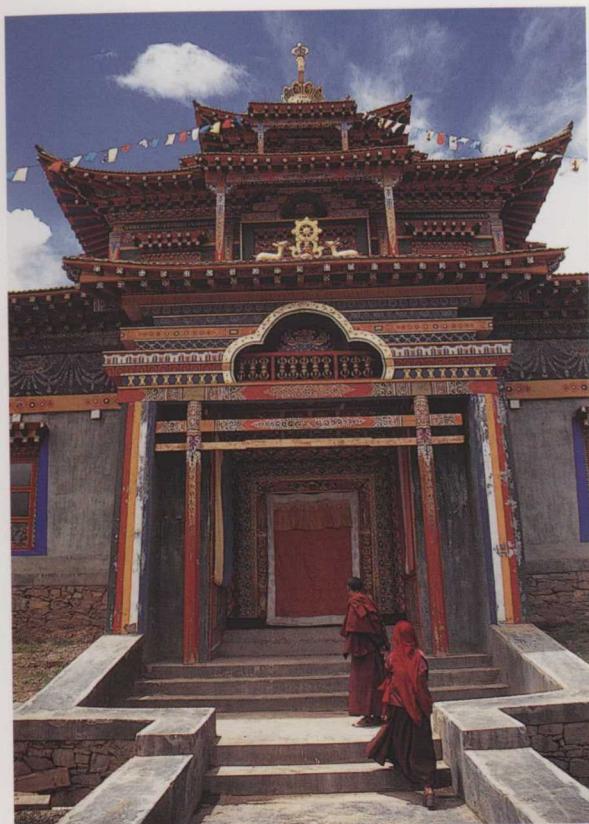
143. Large Manjushri statue (2.5 m) in
front of the Tshogchen Lhakhang's
bookshelves



144. Older bronzes of Amitayus and Vajrasattva in Shedra Lhakhang



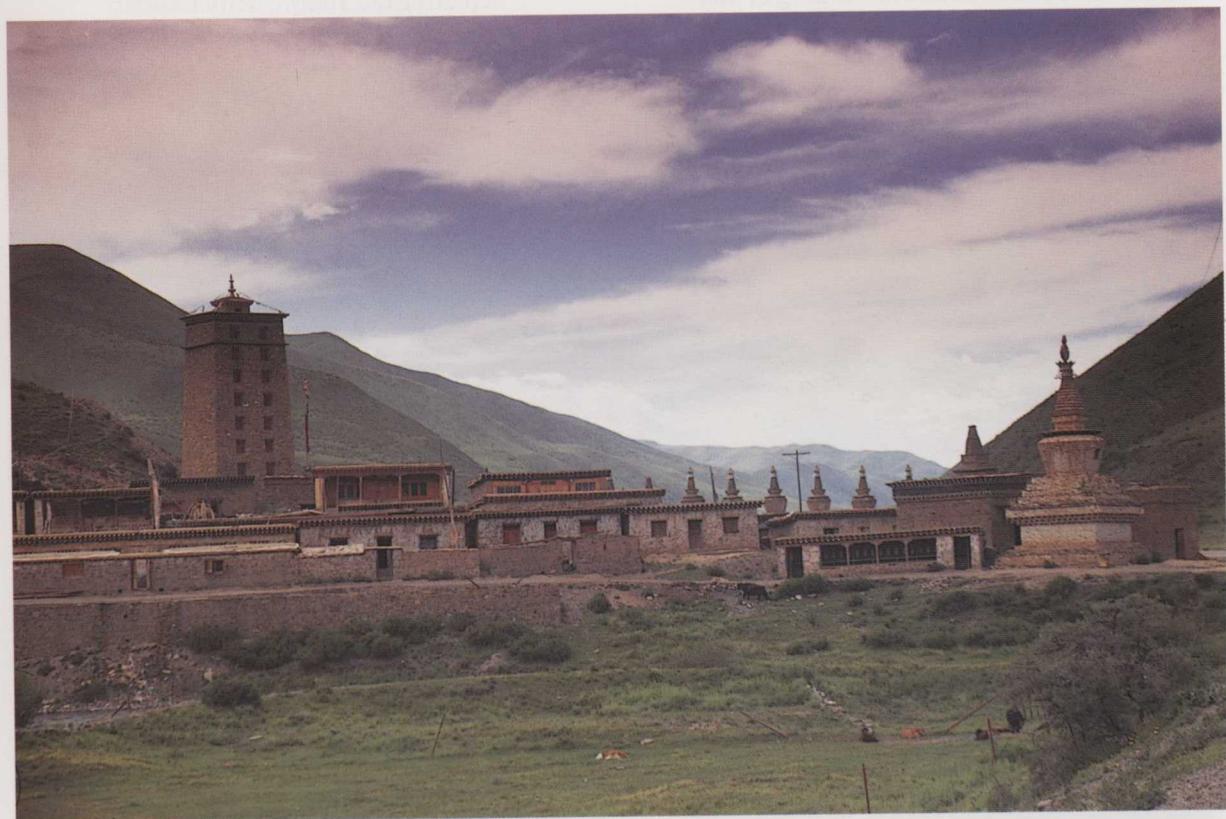
145. The Sangdag Hwaré hall is an architectural representation of Padmasambhava's palace in his Copper Mountain Paradise (Sangdog Pelri)



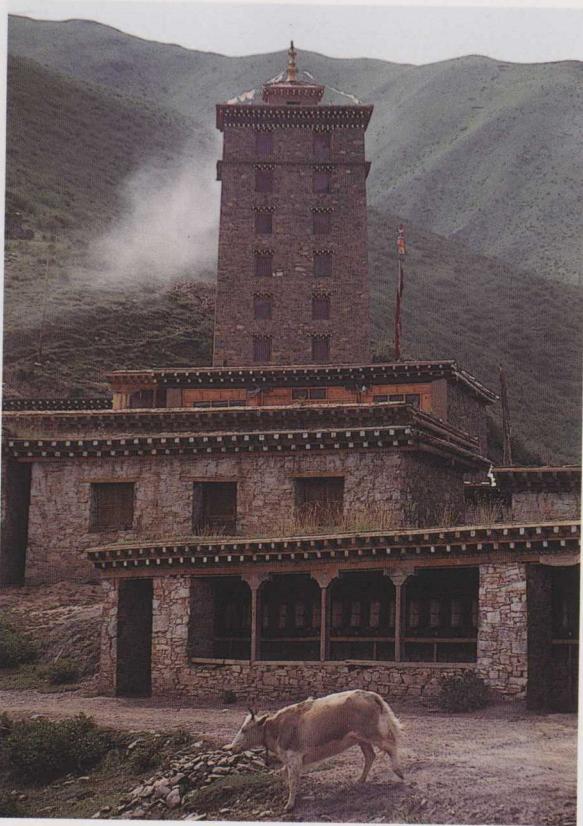
146. Main entrance of the Sangdag Hwaré hall



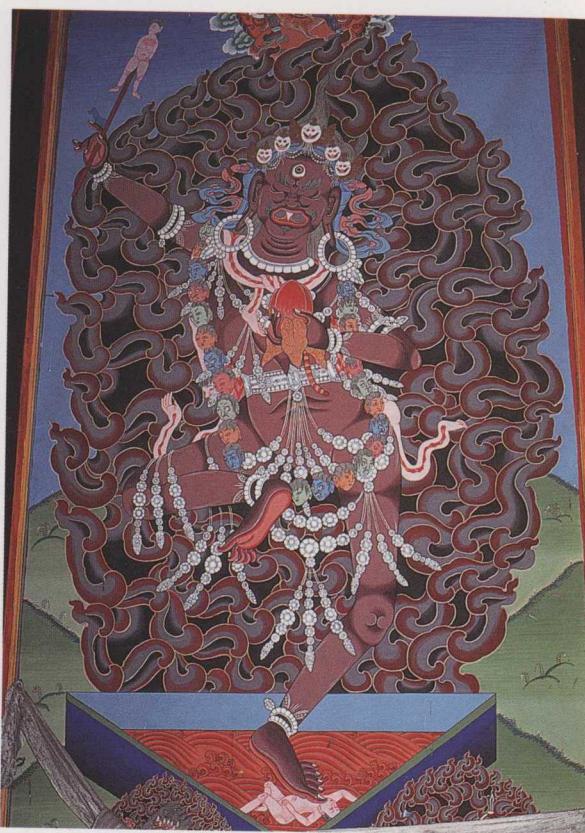
147. A bronze statue of Gesar in Shedra Lhakhang



148. A distant view of Dogongma Gompa



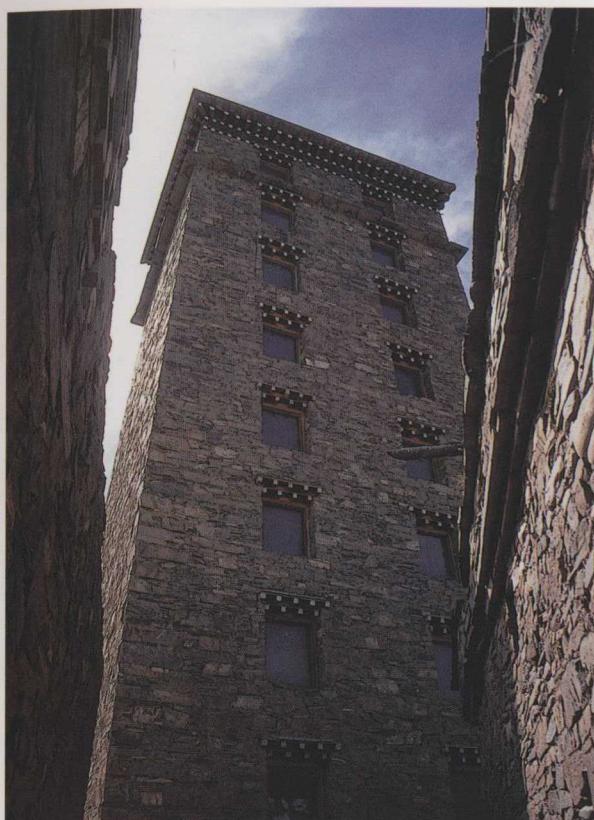
149. The Sölmkha of Dogongma Gompa is a nine-storeyed structure reminding of the famous tower of Milarepa



150. A fresh mural in Dogongma Gompa depicting the Tantric deity Ekajatri



151. Heruka, a freshly painted tutelary deity



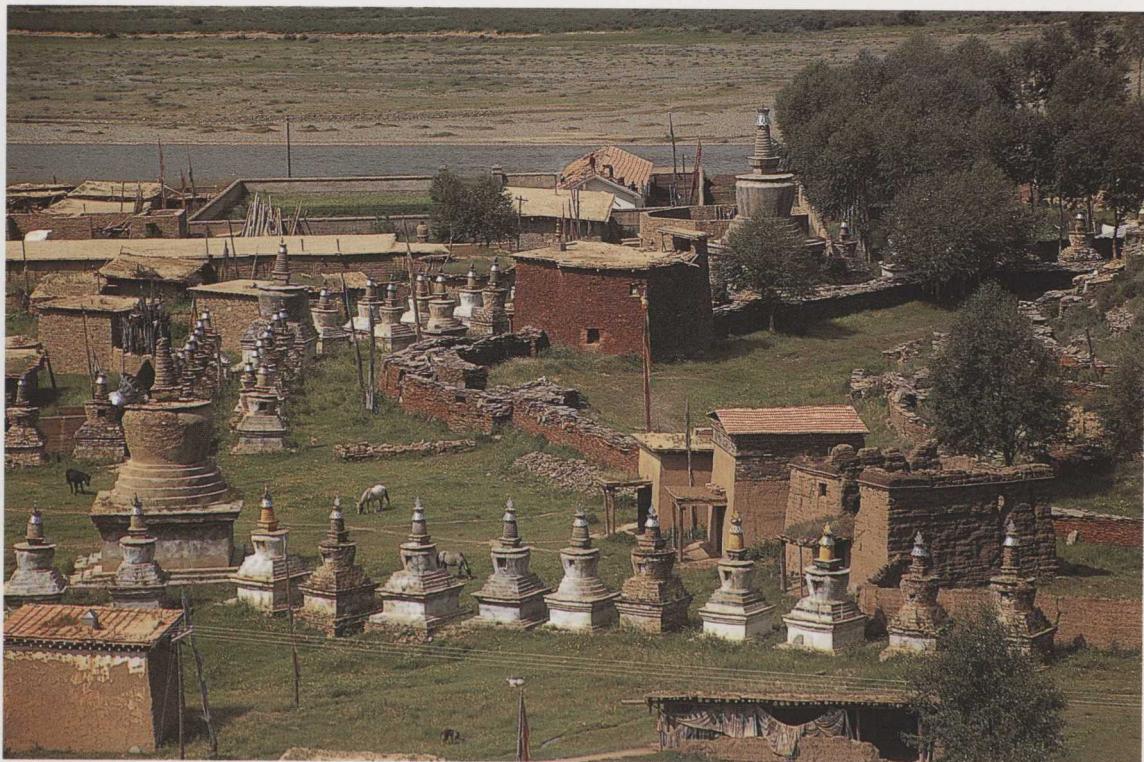
152. The nine-storeyed Sölmkha tower
of Dogongma Gompa



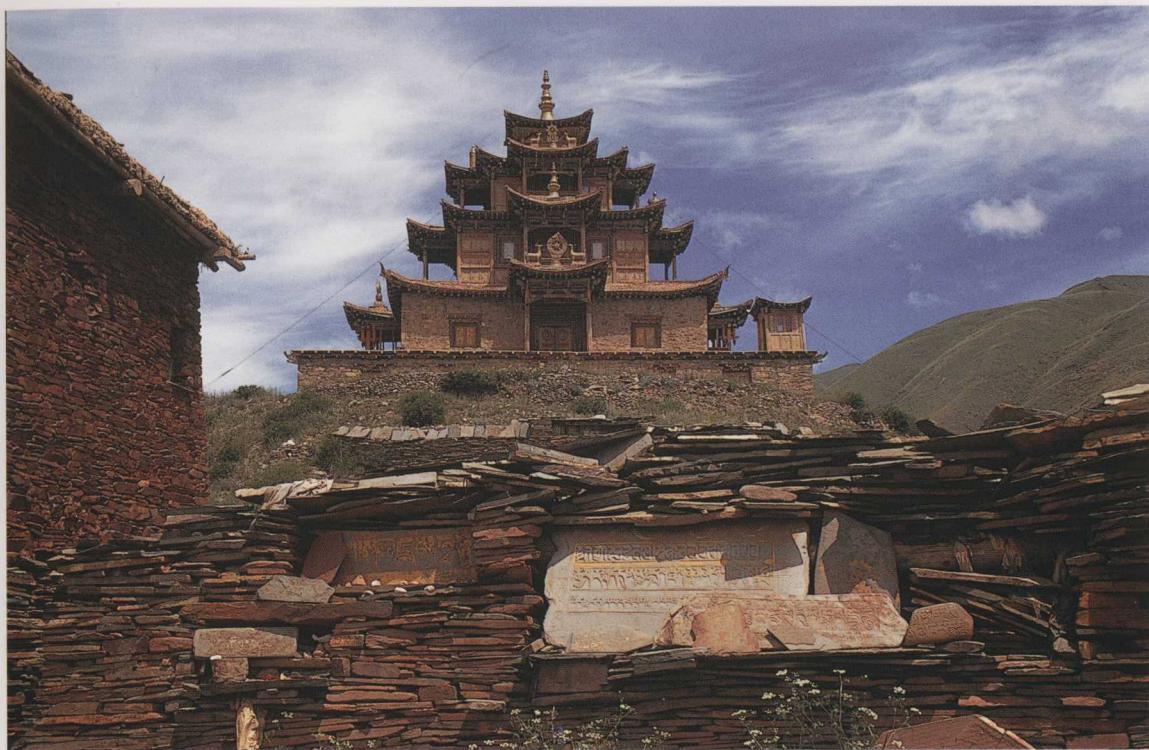
153. Newly built chörten in Pema county town (under construction in 1996)



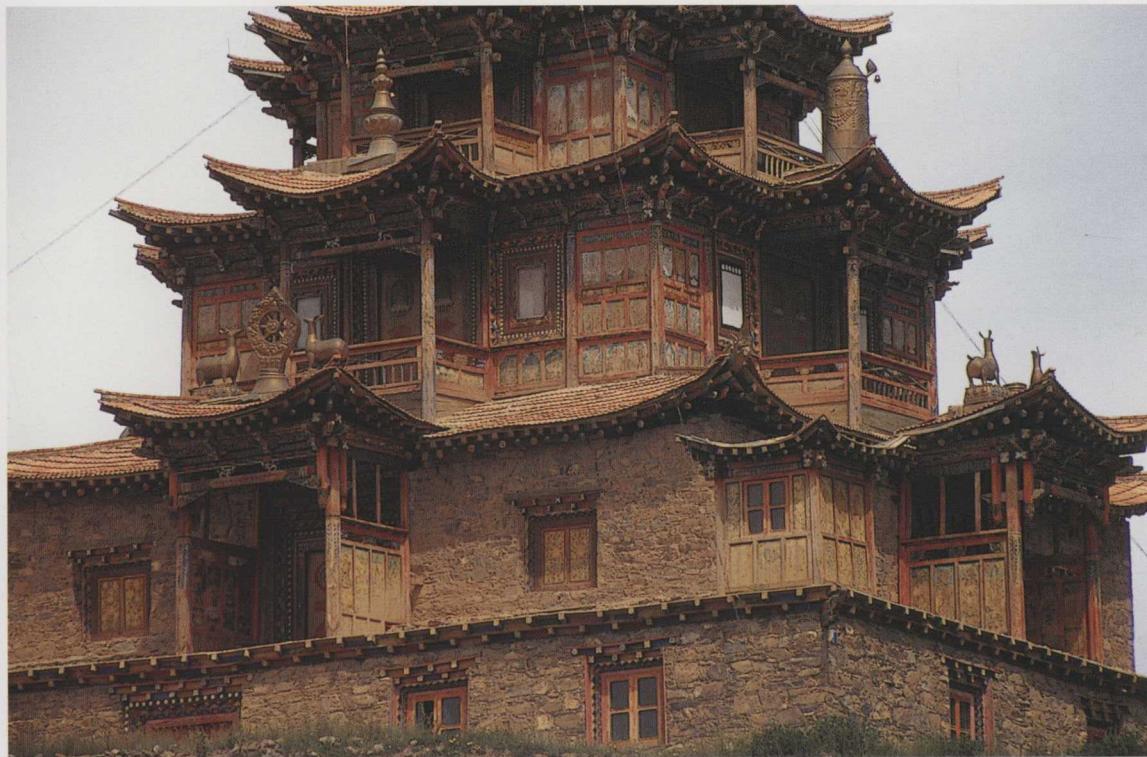
154. Cagri Gompa's unique architectural style's prototype is the Chinese-Tibetan mixed structural form used in Kathog; here that concept has been further developed and spatially extended



155. Surrounded by a circle of about 100 stupas, an inner sacred sphere is separated from manikhangs and small assembly halls outside



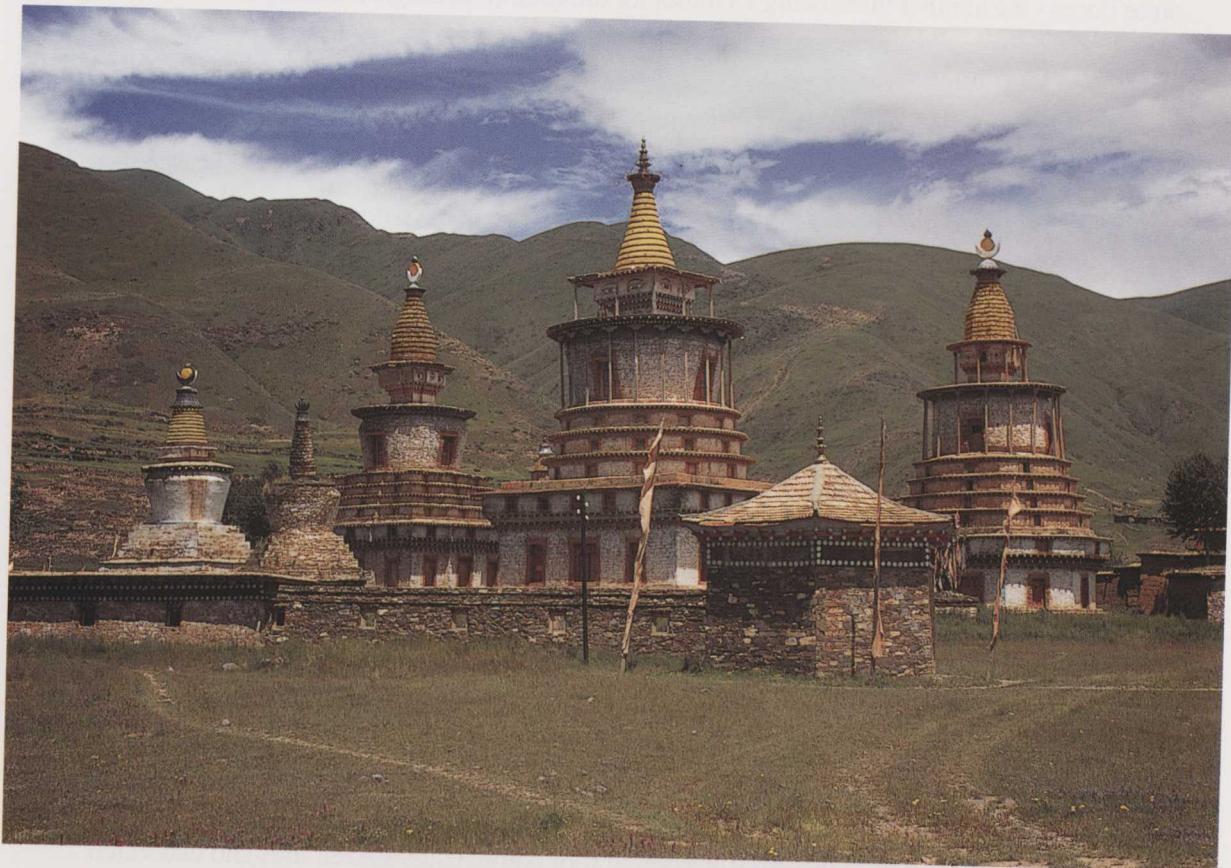
156. From outside the temple Sangdag Hwaré appears to be composed of five tiers, representing the five meditational (Dhyani) Buddhas. Except for the ground and top floors these tiers are further divided into three segments. The inner structure of the building is similarly divided into three floors - the number three being a symbol for the central ideological concepts of Buddhism



157. The temple hall is constructed as an architecturally mixed building of wooden poles and brick walls, covered by a curved, five-layered roof, surfaced by glazed tiles and decorated with Tibetan ornaments and symbols (Dharma wheel, gyaltshen)



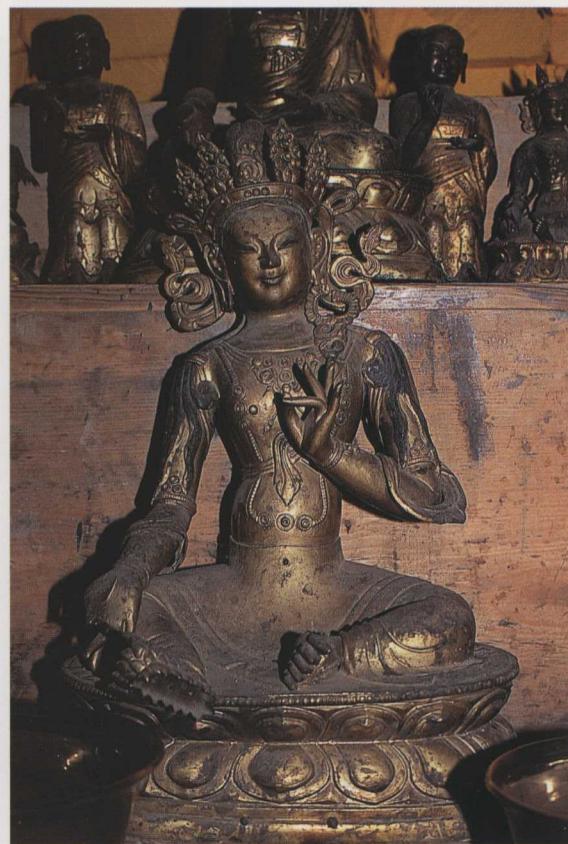
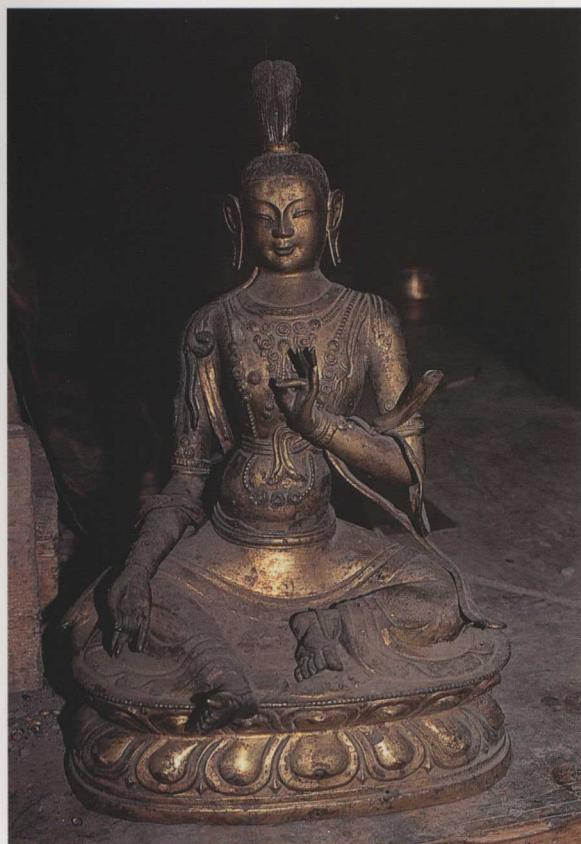
158. Some of the more than 100 stupas surrounding the sacred sphere



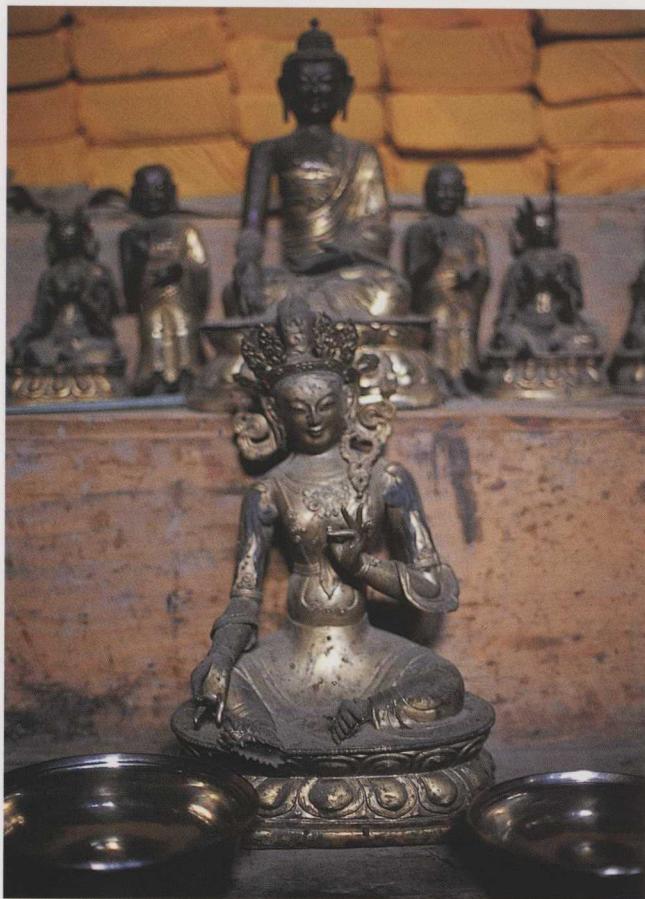
159. A view of the three kumbum chörten of Achonggya Monastery



160. Main assembly hall of Achonggya Monastery



161-162. Old bronzes in the dukhang of Achonggya Monastery (Green Tara)



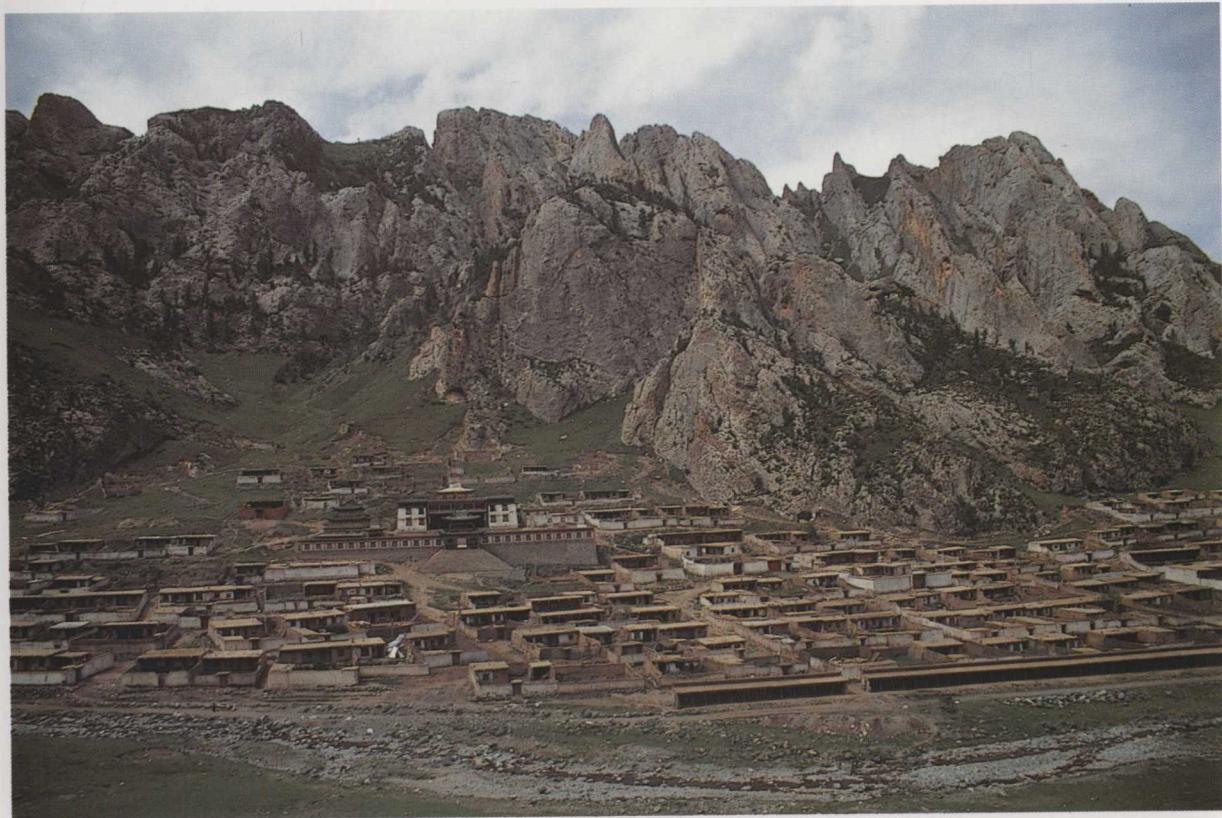
163. Old bronzes in the dukhang of Achonggya Monastery (Green Tara)



164. Pilgrims in Achonggya Monastery



165. A distant view of the three kumbum chörten, Achonggya Monastery



166. Panoramic view of the monastery Drakar Treldzong Thösamling

167. Shambhala painting in the Maitreya temple



168. Large Maitreya statue in Jampe Lhakhang



169. A unique bhavacakra (wheel of life and death) in Chamru Monastery





170. South shore of Lake Kokonor



171. Nomad women at Lake Kokonor



172. Kangtsha Monastery: statue of Dukar (Usnisasitataptra) in Dukar Lhakhang



173. A row of large chörten marks the entrance to Lamo Garthog Monastery



174. Recent view of Lamo Garthog

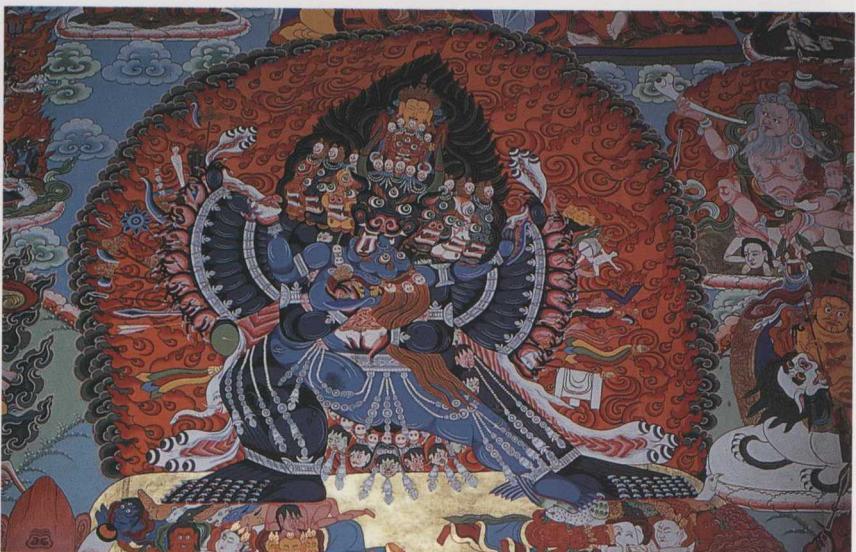


175. Lamo Garthog Monastery: main assembly hall

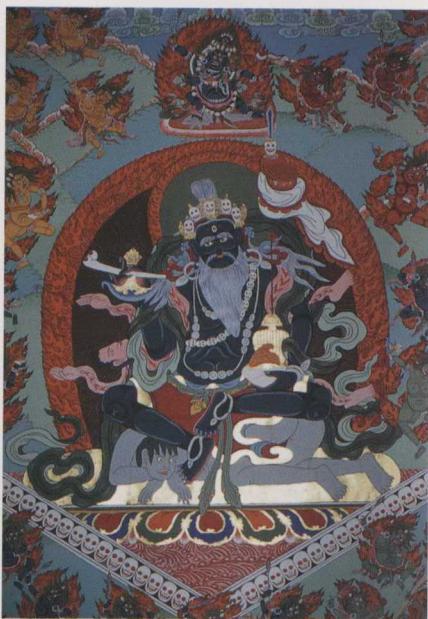
176. Gompa Soma
monastery

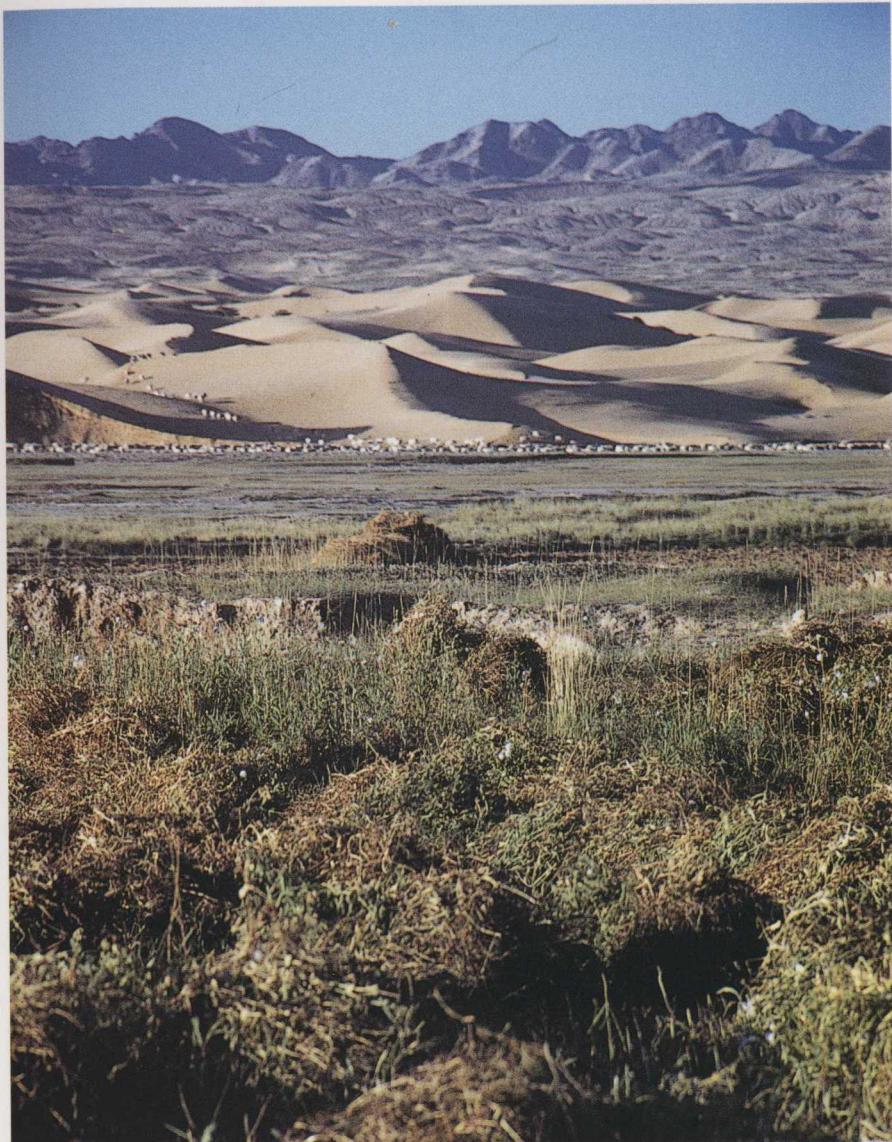


177. New murals in Gompa
Soma, here depicting
Yamantaka, clearly show the
influence of the Rebgong art
school in Rongwo valley



178. Similar murals showing
Dramzehi

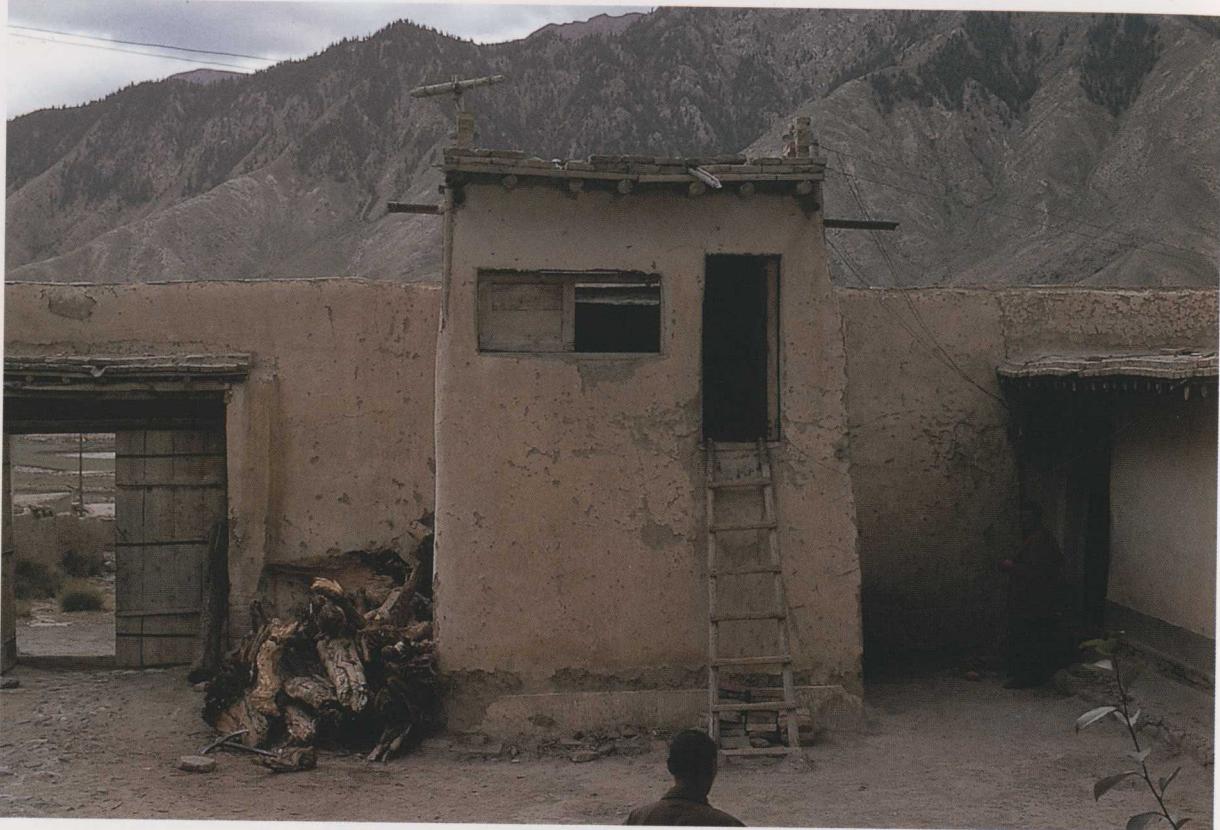




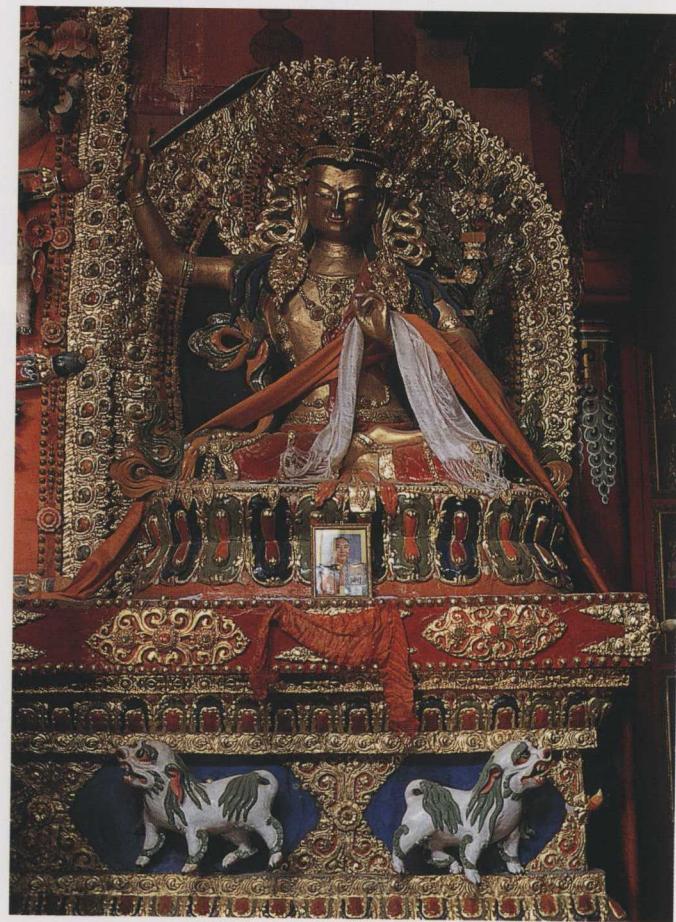
179. Landscape in the eastern part of the Tsaidam Basin



180. The dukhang of Tulan Monastery



181. Tulan Monastery: invocation tower



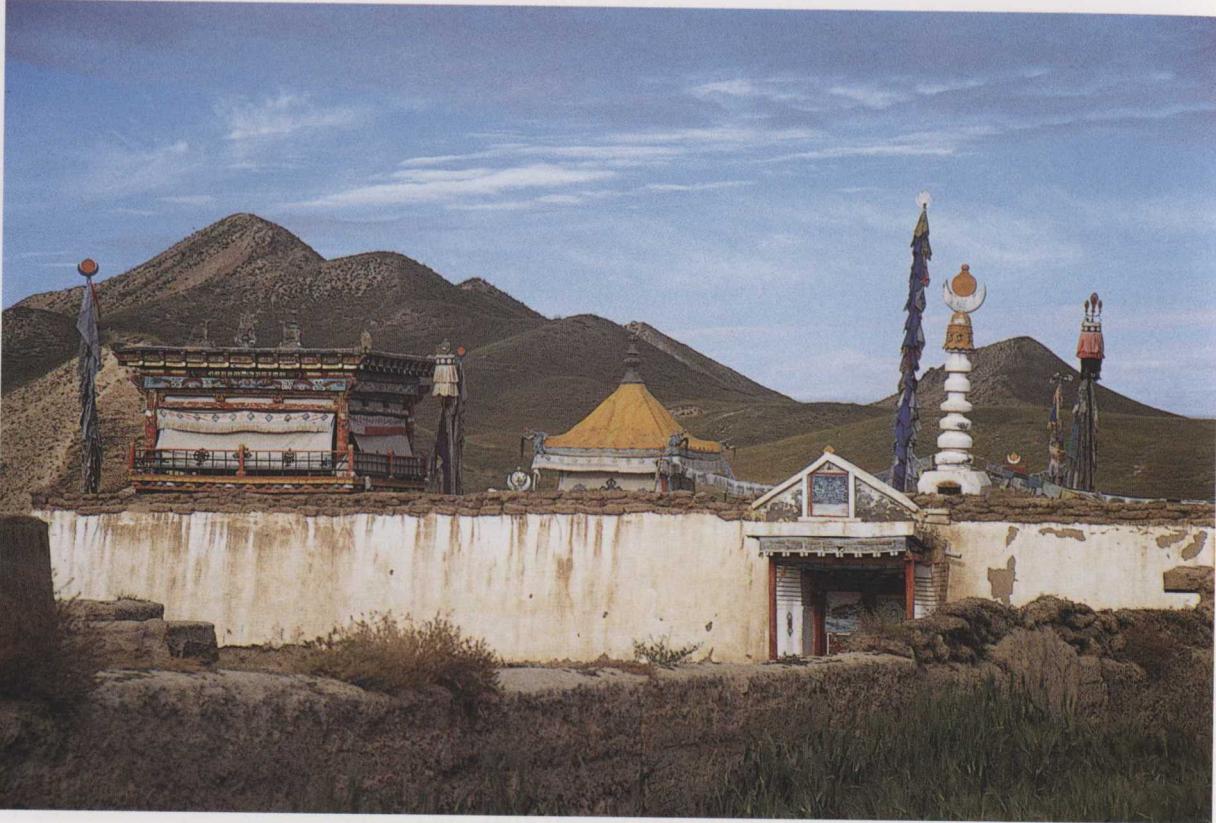
182. Ahandalai Monastery:
Manjushri statue in the
temple Jampe Lhakhang



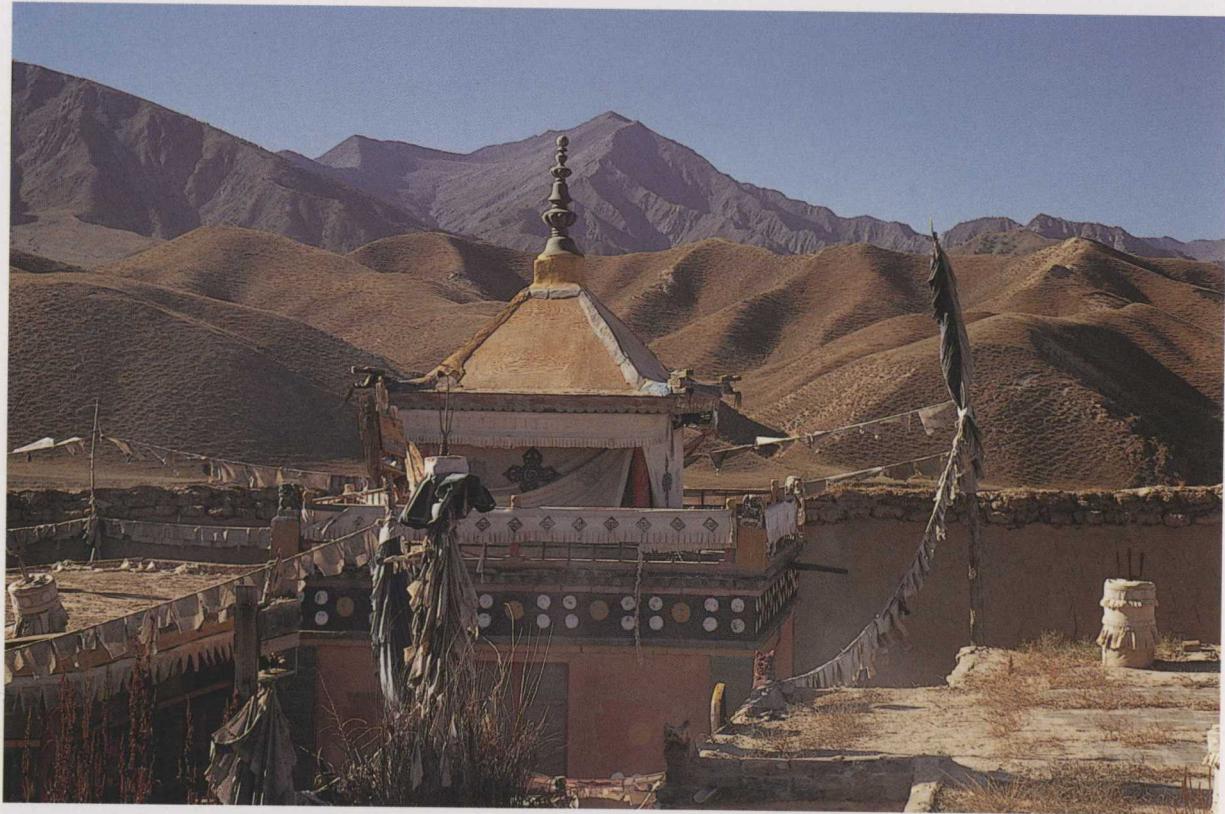
183. Satho Ganden Monastery: mural depicting the Gelugpa tshogshing



184. Ahandalai Monastery mural: Buddha Shakyamuni



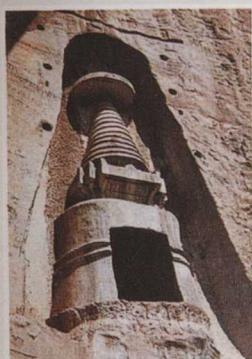
185. Pachen Shingde Gompa near Xiangride town is quite unique in its mixed style of Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese architecture



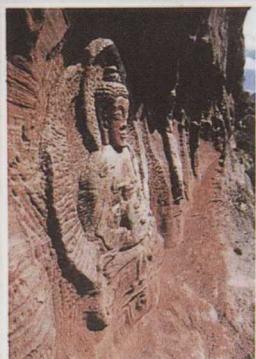
186. A small sanctuary of Pachen Shingde Monastery



岗龙石窟寺全景



石塔

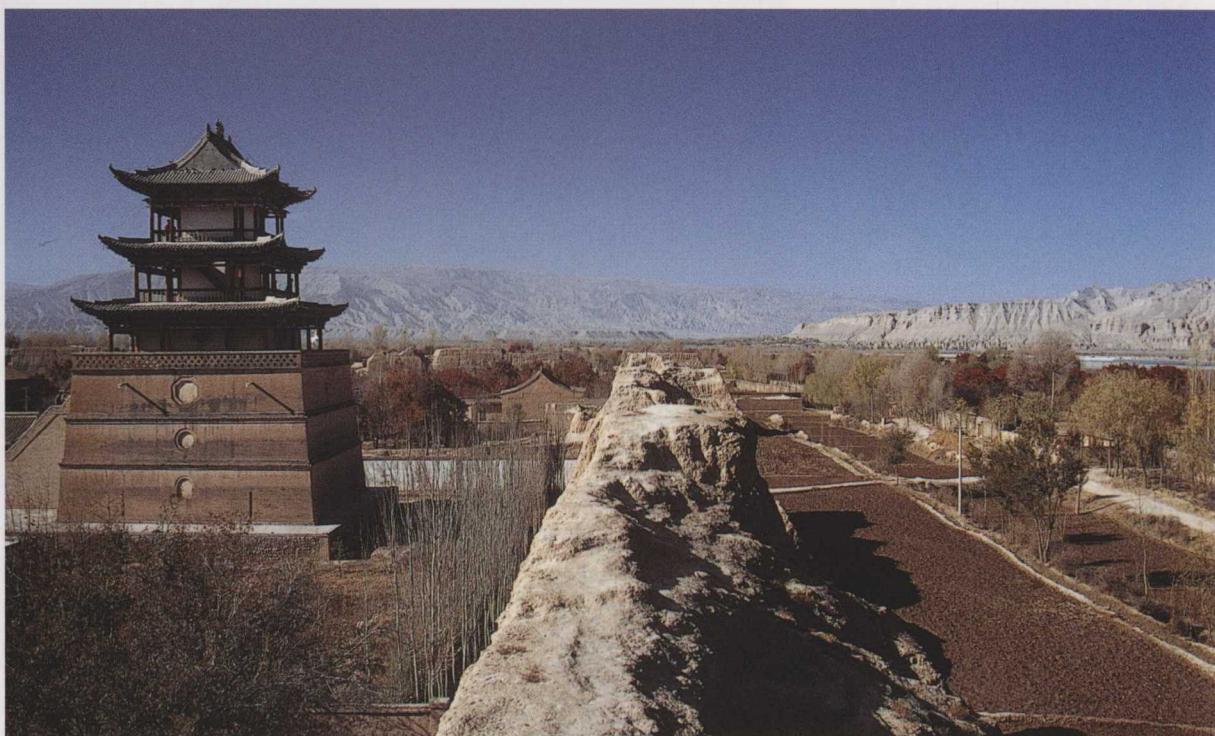


释迦牟尼佛像

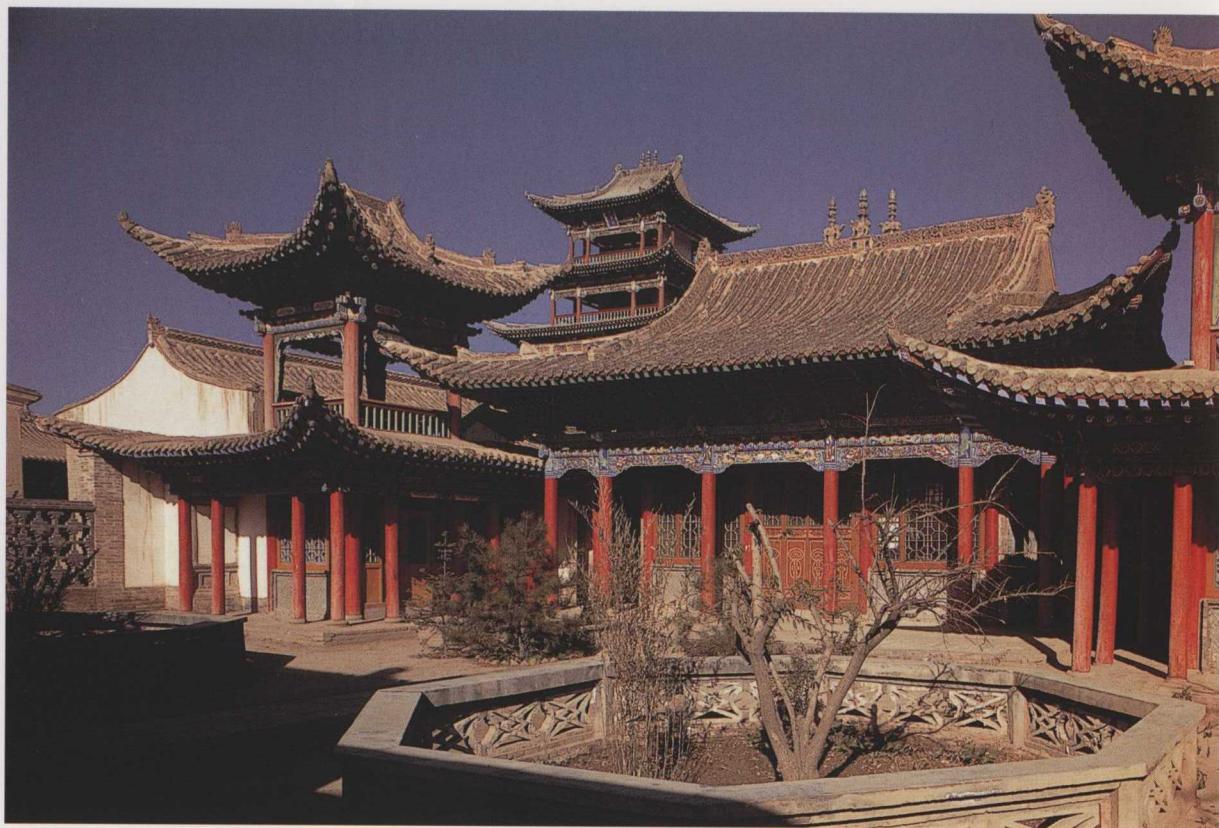
187. Ganglong Si Shiku: On a 15 m high and 100 m long sandstone cliff, an image of Shakyamuni Buddha and of a Tibetan-style stupa are carved out of the rocks



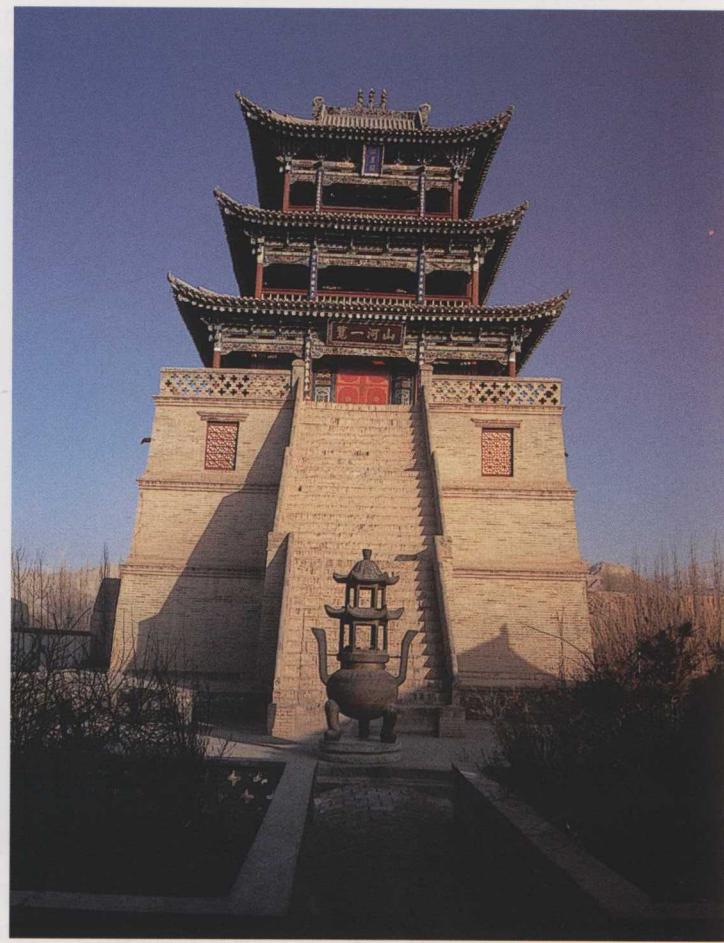
188. Ganglong grottoe's main feature is the 6 m high relief stupa which can be seen from afar



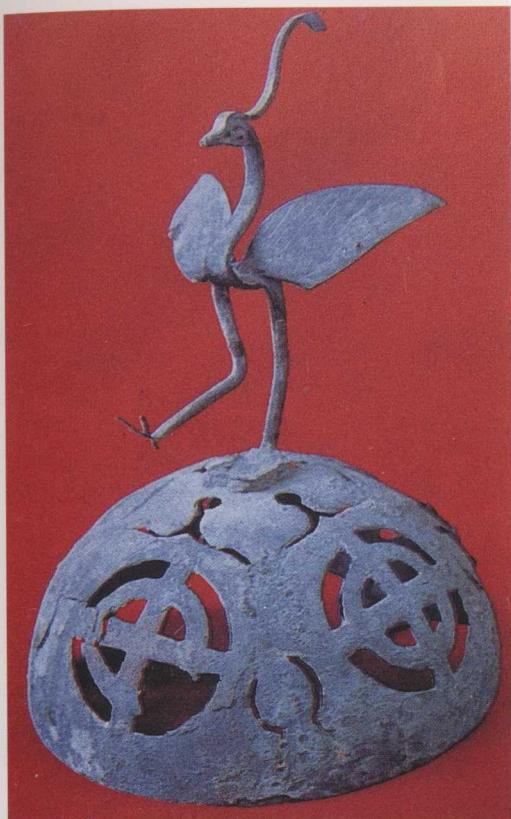
189. Remnants of Guide city wall, and the Jade Emperor's Pavilion (Yuhuang Ge) erected in 1592, an example of religious Ming architecture of Daoist significance



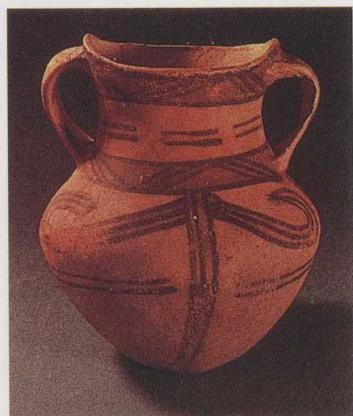
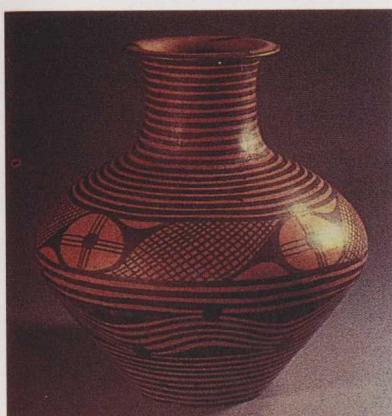
190. Daoist temple halls of the Yuhuang Ge complex



191. The Yuhuang Ge's main temple hall, a 28-m high pagoda-like brick and wood structure, towers above the old town of Guide



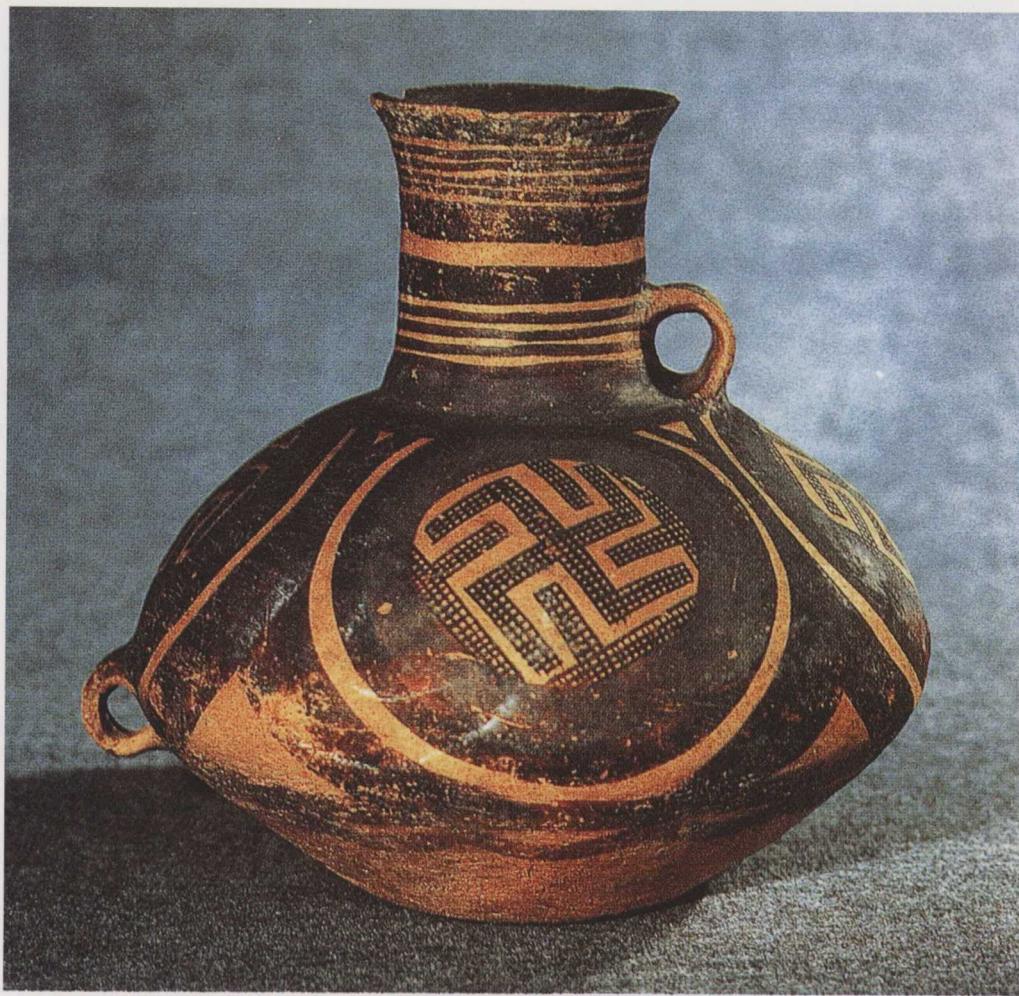
192. Helmet of a Xiongnu warrior, dating back about 2000 years. It was unearthed from a grave of the Western Han dynasty's Shangsunjiazhai Tombs near Houzihe village (half way between Xining city and Datong county town)



193. Pottery of the Meso- and Neolithic cultures of Machang, Majiayao and Xingdian abound in the eastern part of Qinghai province, especially in Minhe county. These examples were unearthed in 1978-1980 near Hetaozhuang village, 10 km southwest of Minhe



194. Xihai ruins, site of the former city and fortress of Xihai Prefecture of the Han Chinese Wang Mang dynasty (9-25 A.D.)



195. Pottery found in Yangshan tombs, Meso- and Neolithic cultures

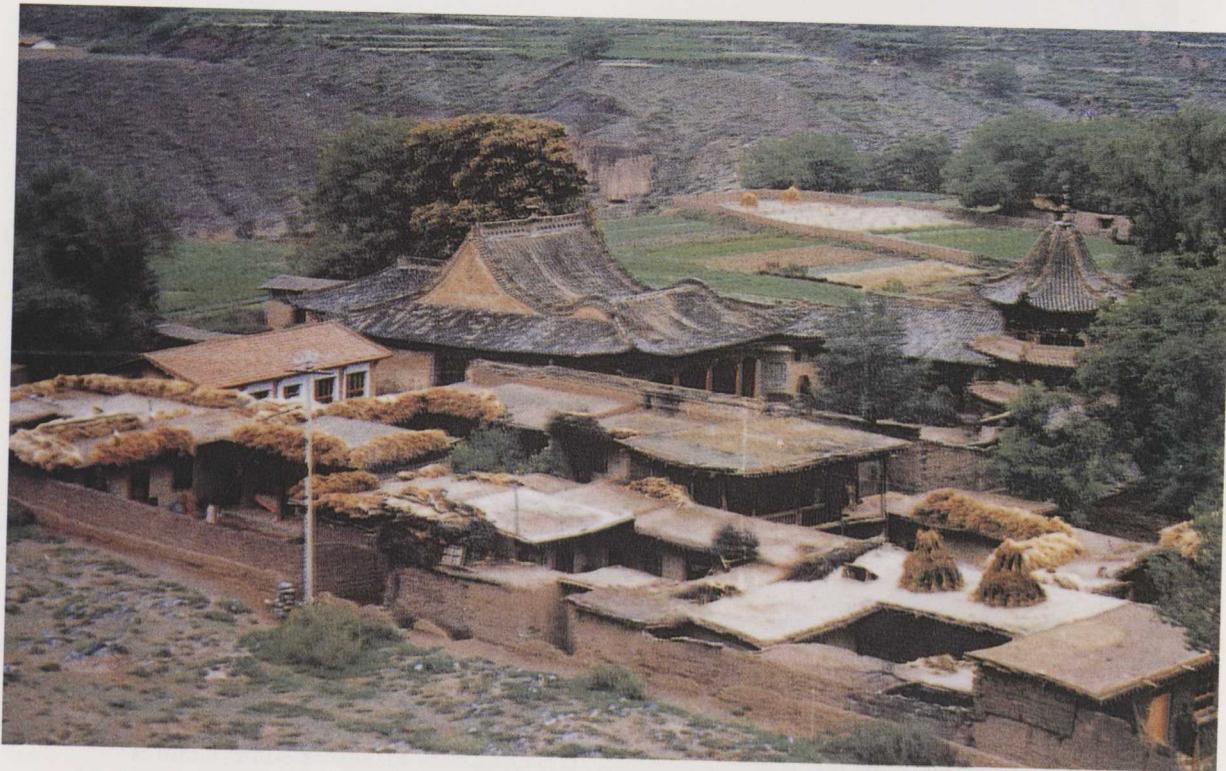
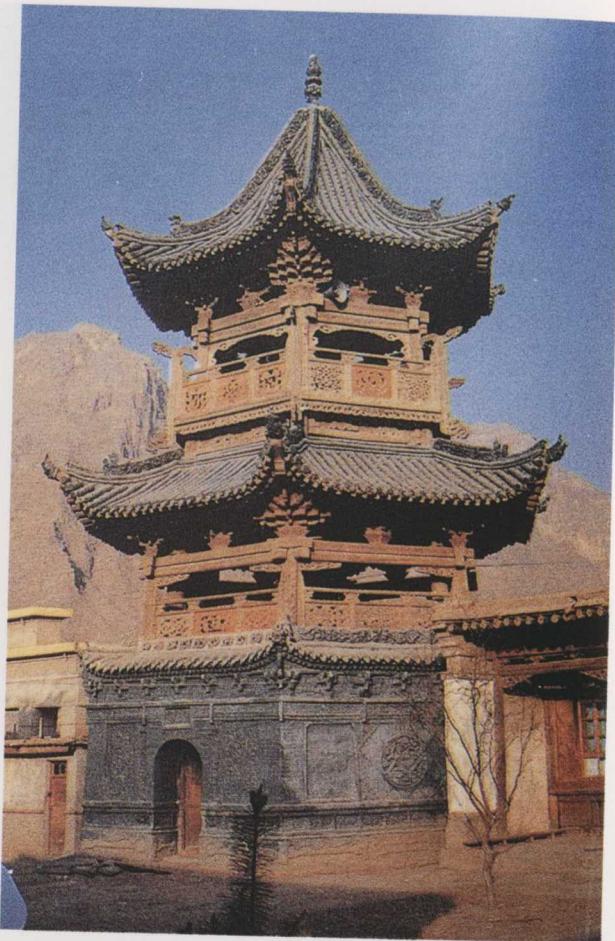


196. A wooden horse excavated in 1977 on the outskirts of Xining city, dates from Han dynasty (2nd cent. B.C. - 2nd cent. A.D.). It is 1.1 m high and 88.5 cm long



197. The modern form of Xunhua mosque, Jiezi Qingzhen Si, shows some Central Asian influence, the previous dominant Chinese architectural elements having been abandoned (see plate 11, p.110)

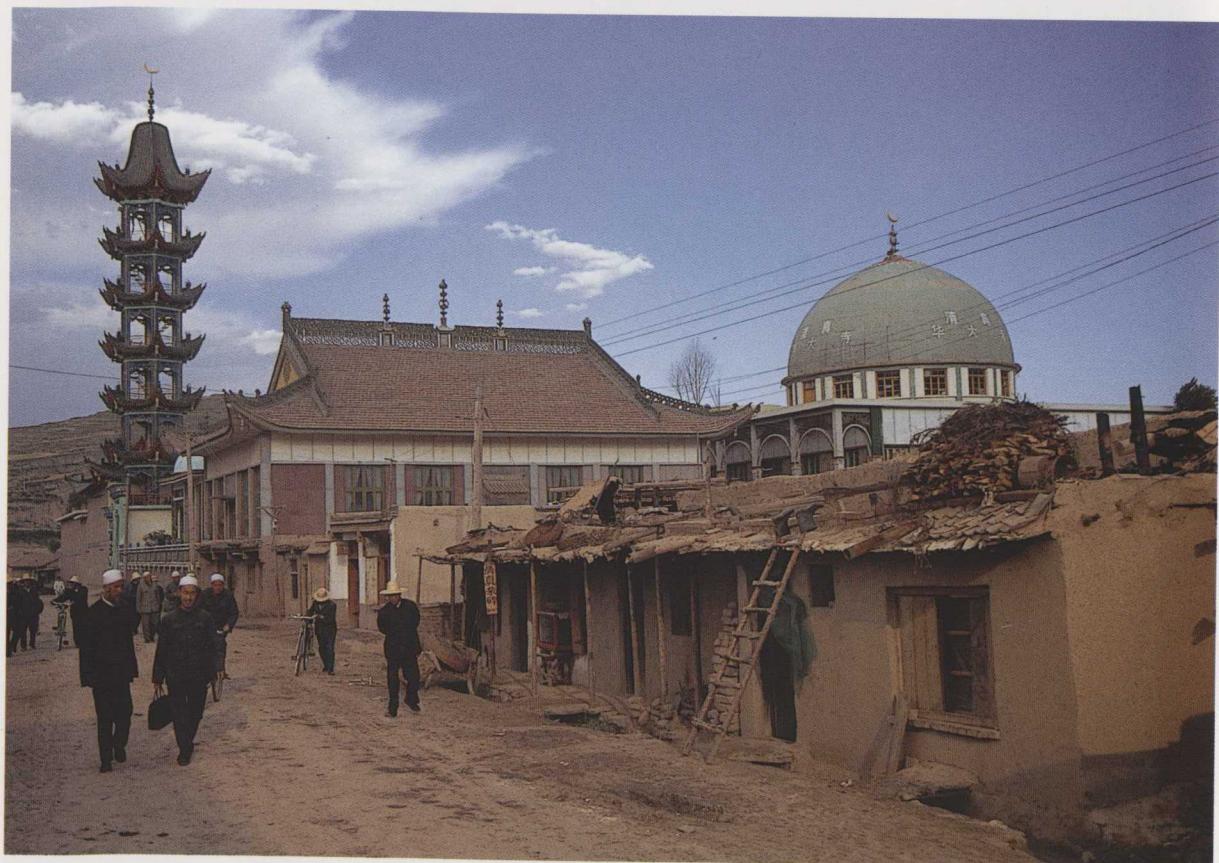
198. The minaret of Qingshui mosque,
8 km east of Xunhua county town



199. Mengda mosque in Mengda village (Xunhua county) on the banks of the Yellow River,
15 km before it leaves Qinghai province, is a typical example of a traditional Salar mosque



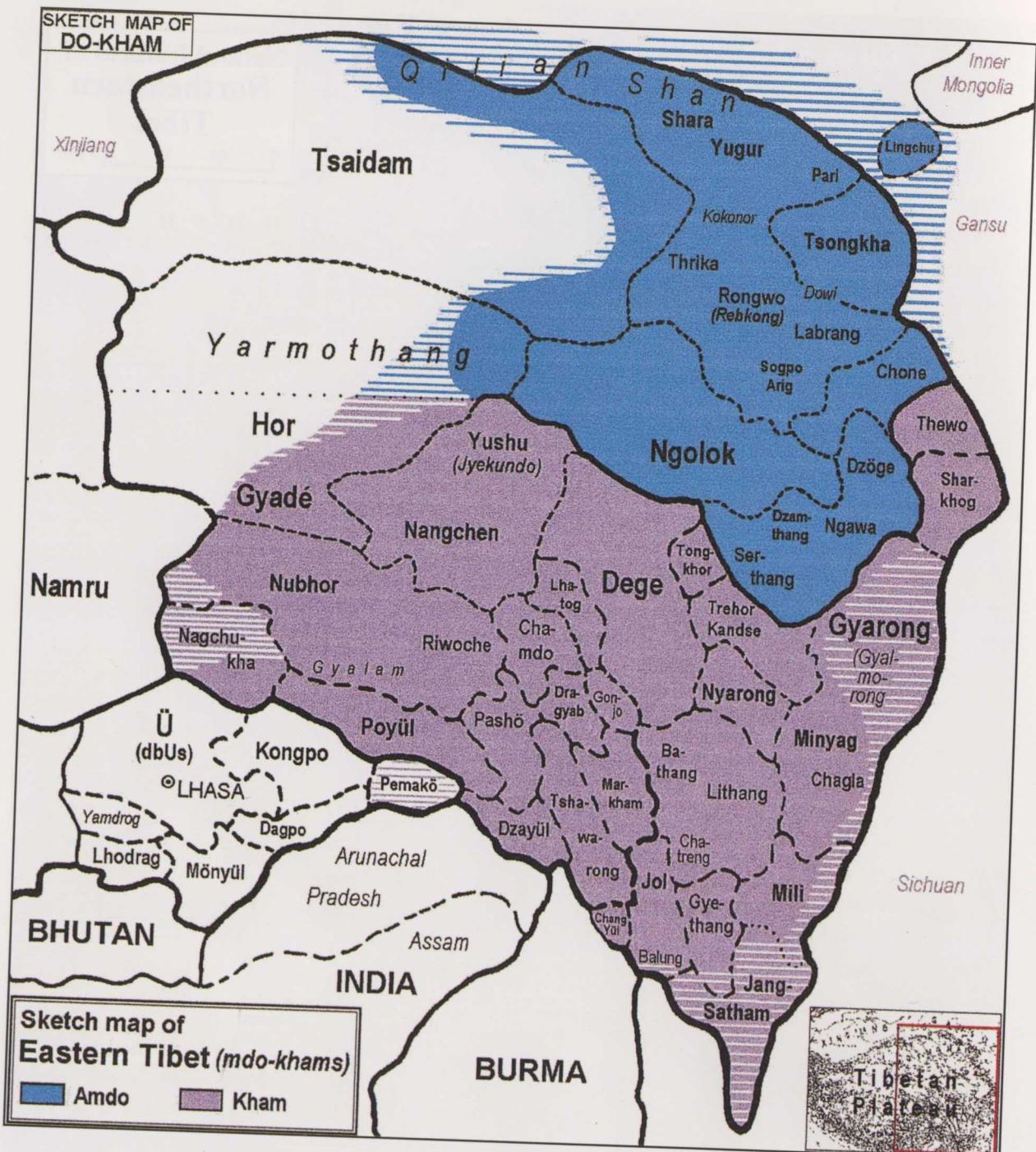
200. Minaret of a Hui mosque in Linxia, Gansu province



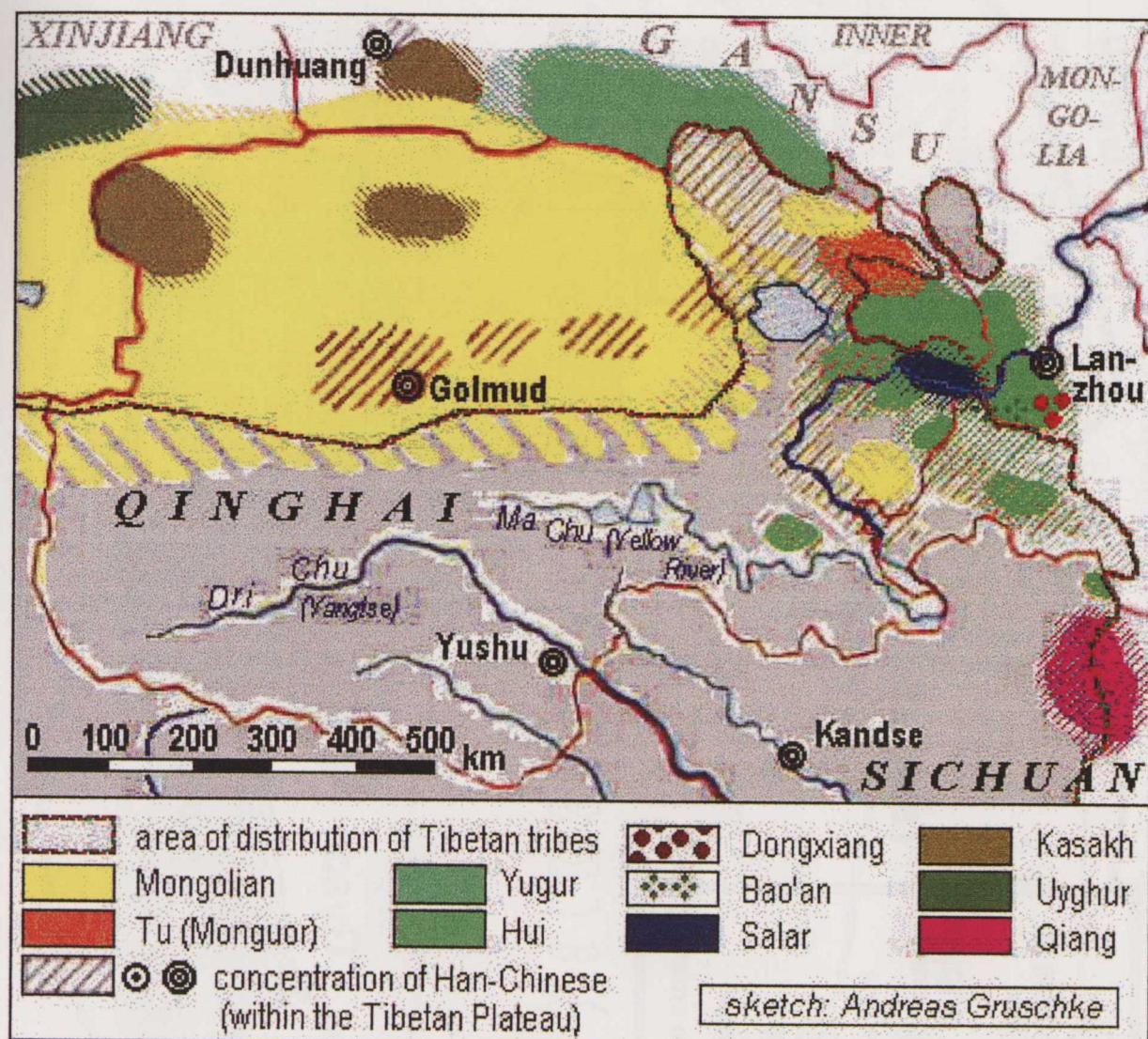
201. New mosque in Lintan (the old city of Taozhou, Gansu)



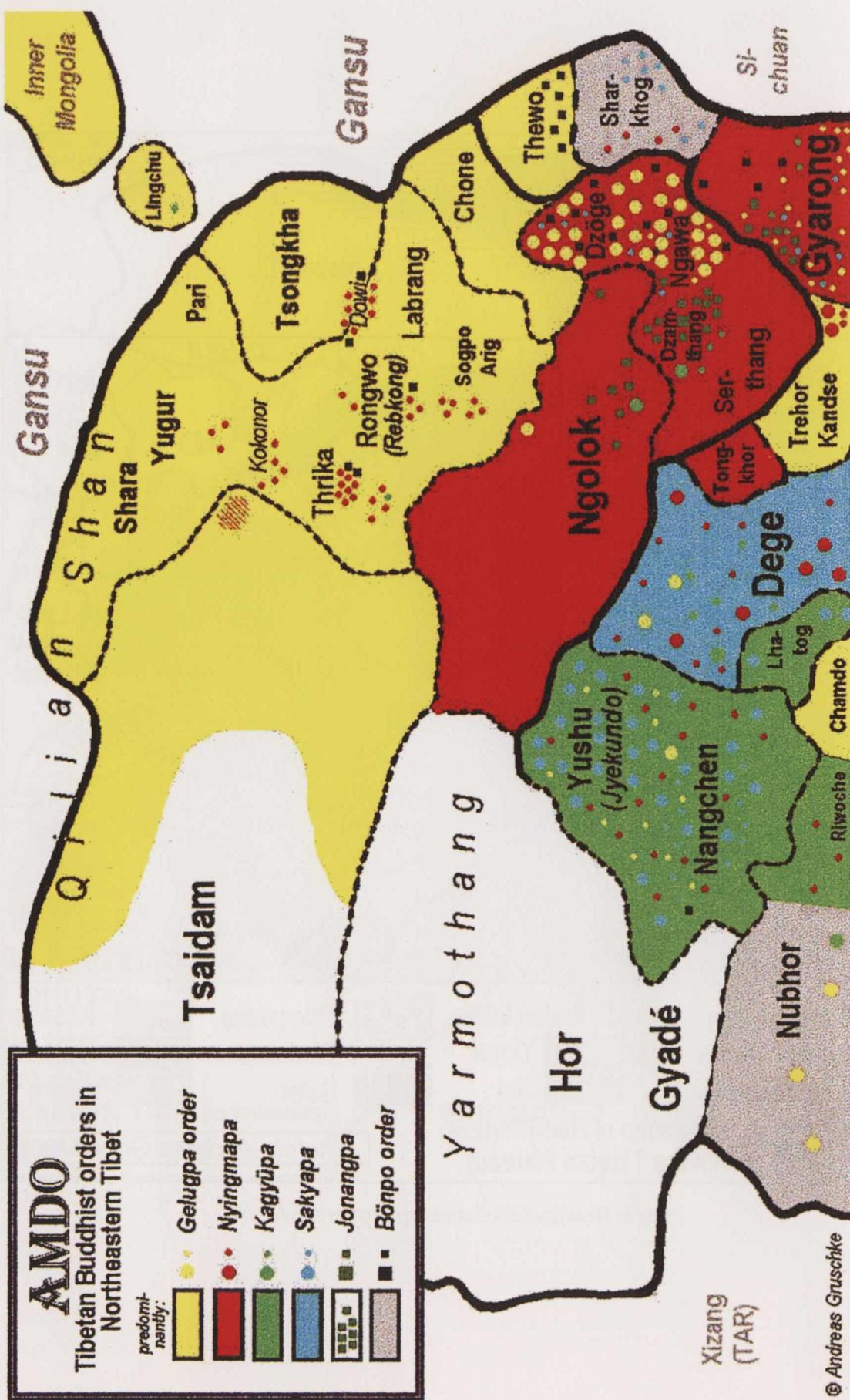
Map 1. Natural features of Northeastern Tibet



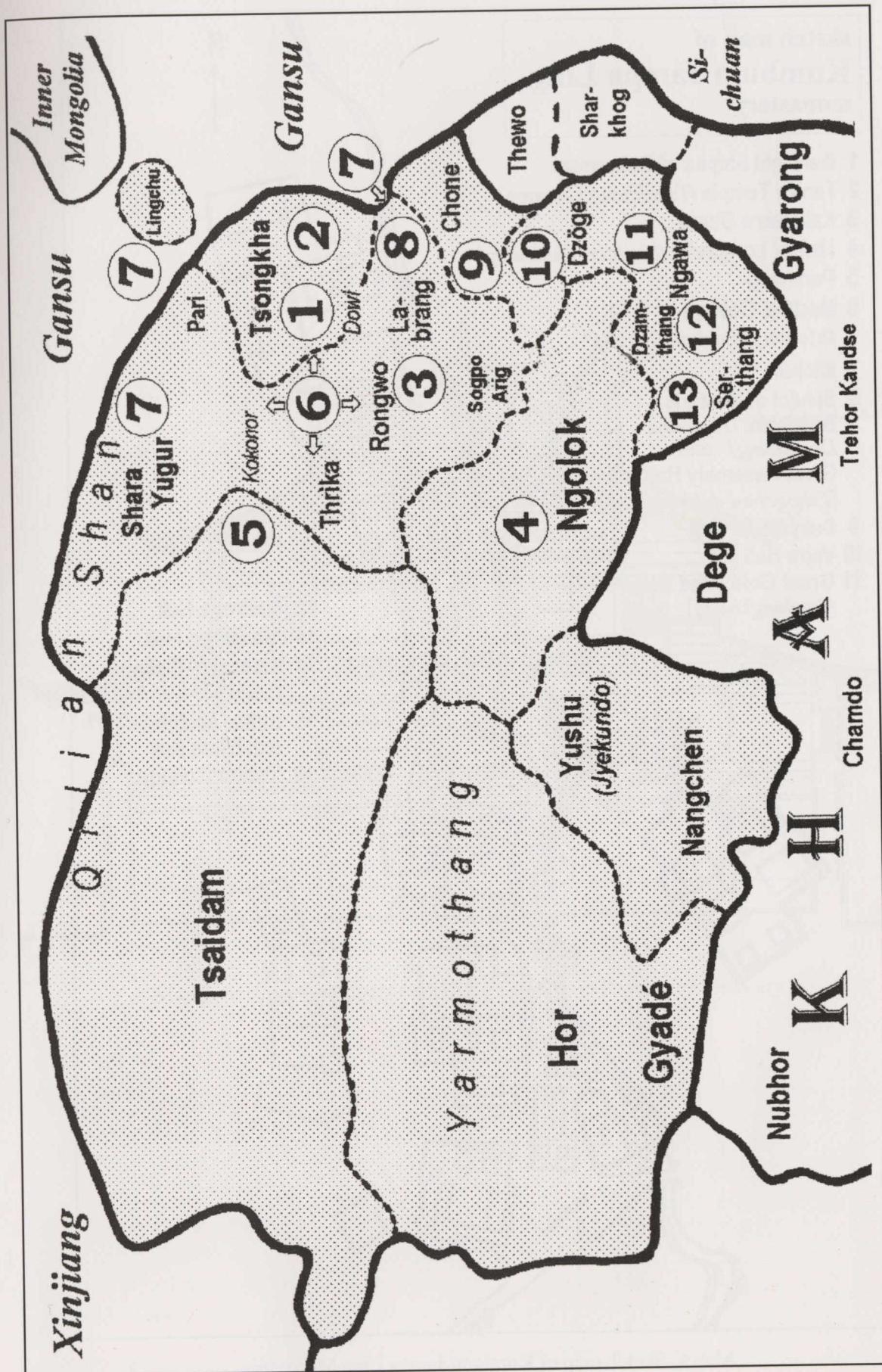
Map 2. Sketch map of Eastern Tibet (mdo-khams)



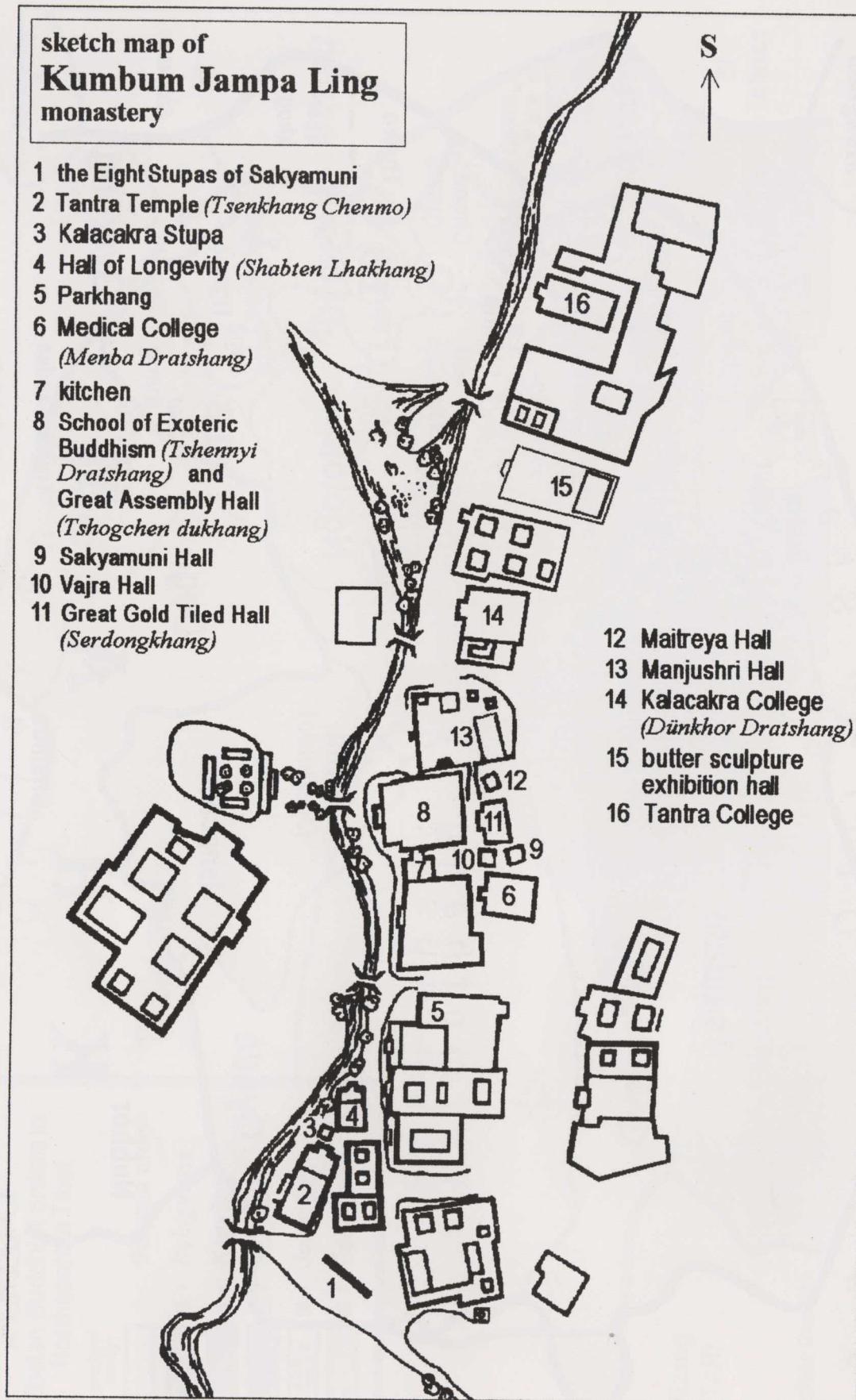
Map 3. Distribution of ethnic groups in Amdo



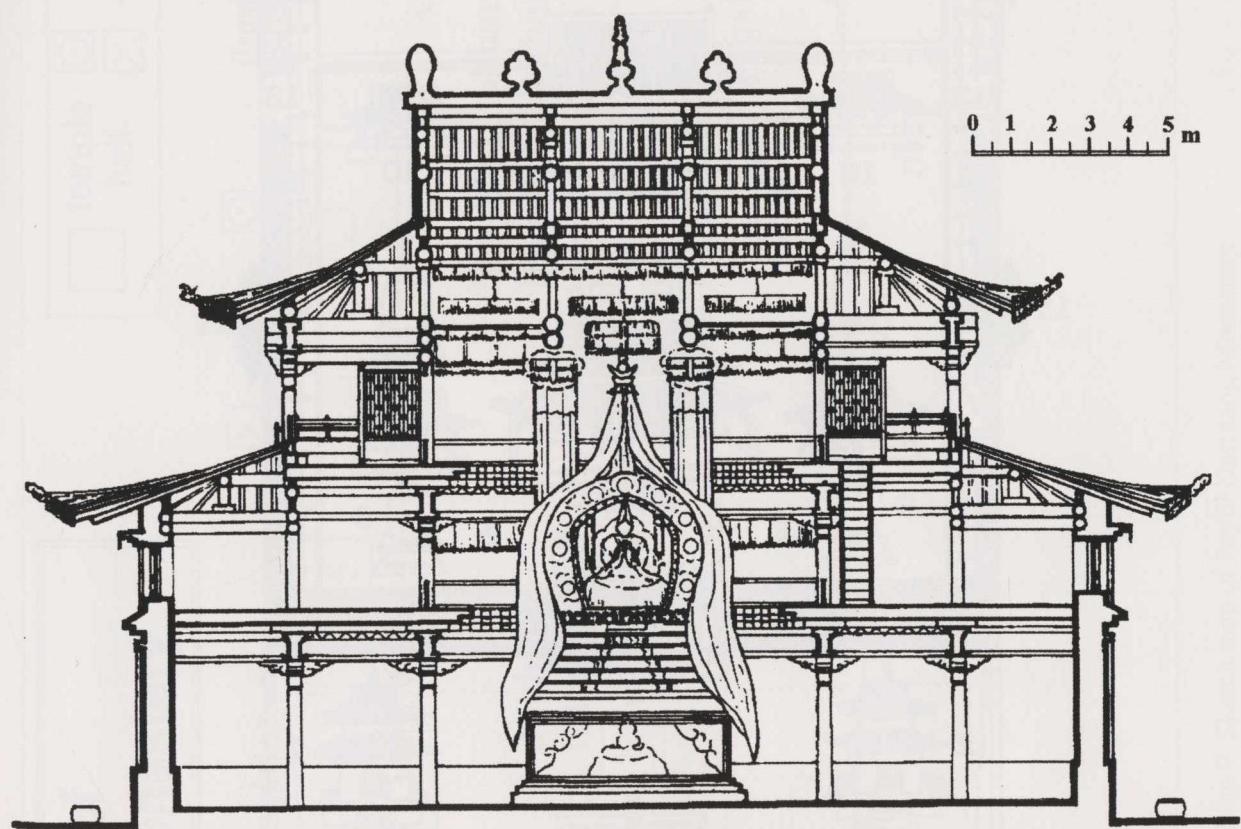
Map 4. Distribution of Tibetan Buddhist orders in Northeastern Tibet



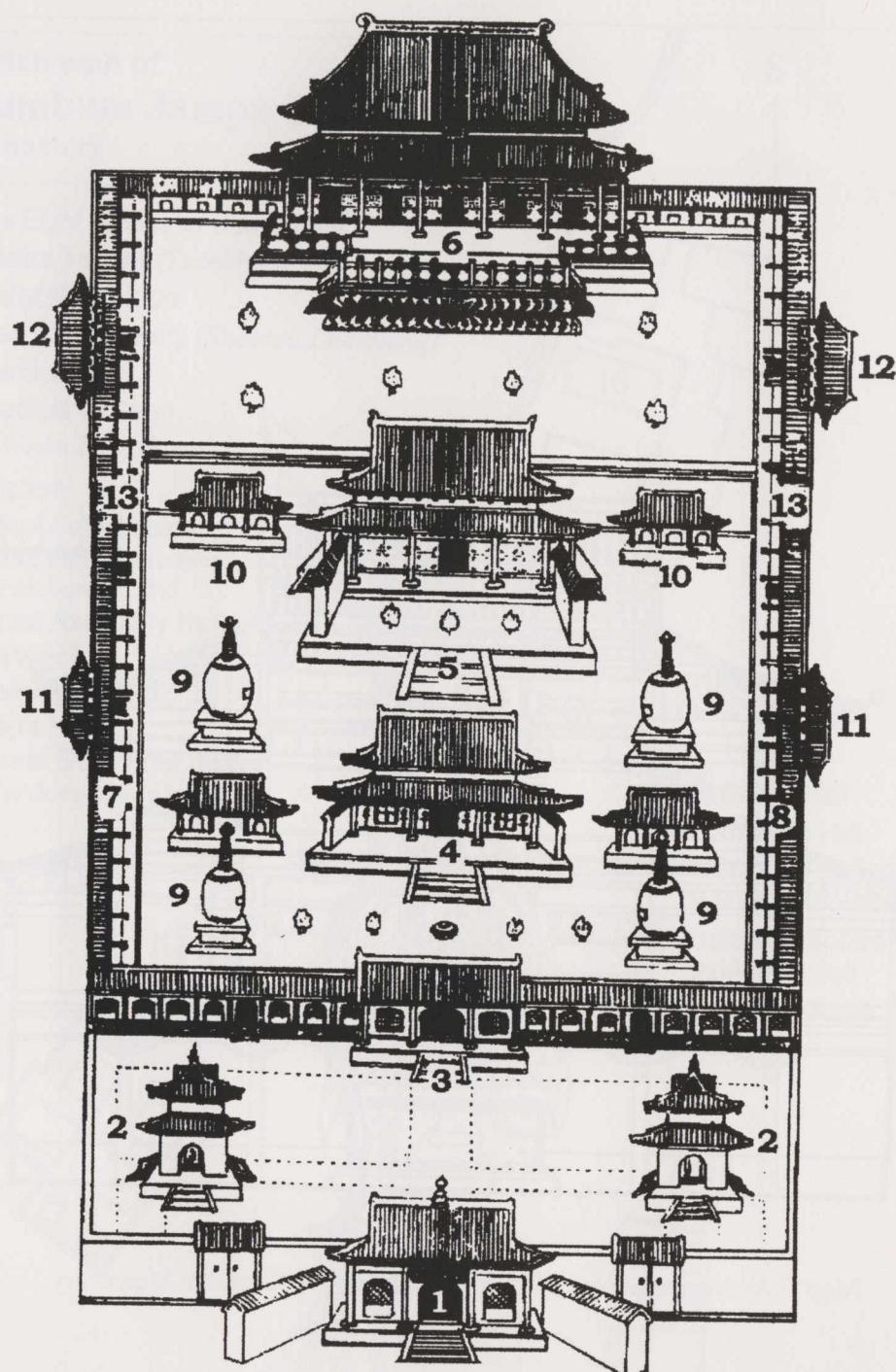
Map 5. Distribution of major cultural monuments in the Greater Amdo region of Northeastern Tibet



Map 6. Sketch map of Kumbum Jampa Ling Monastery

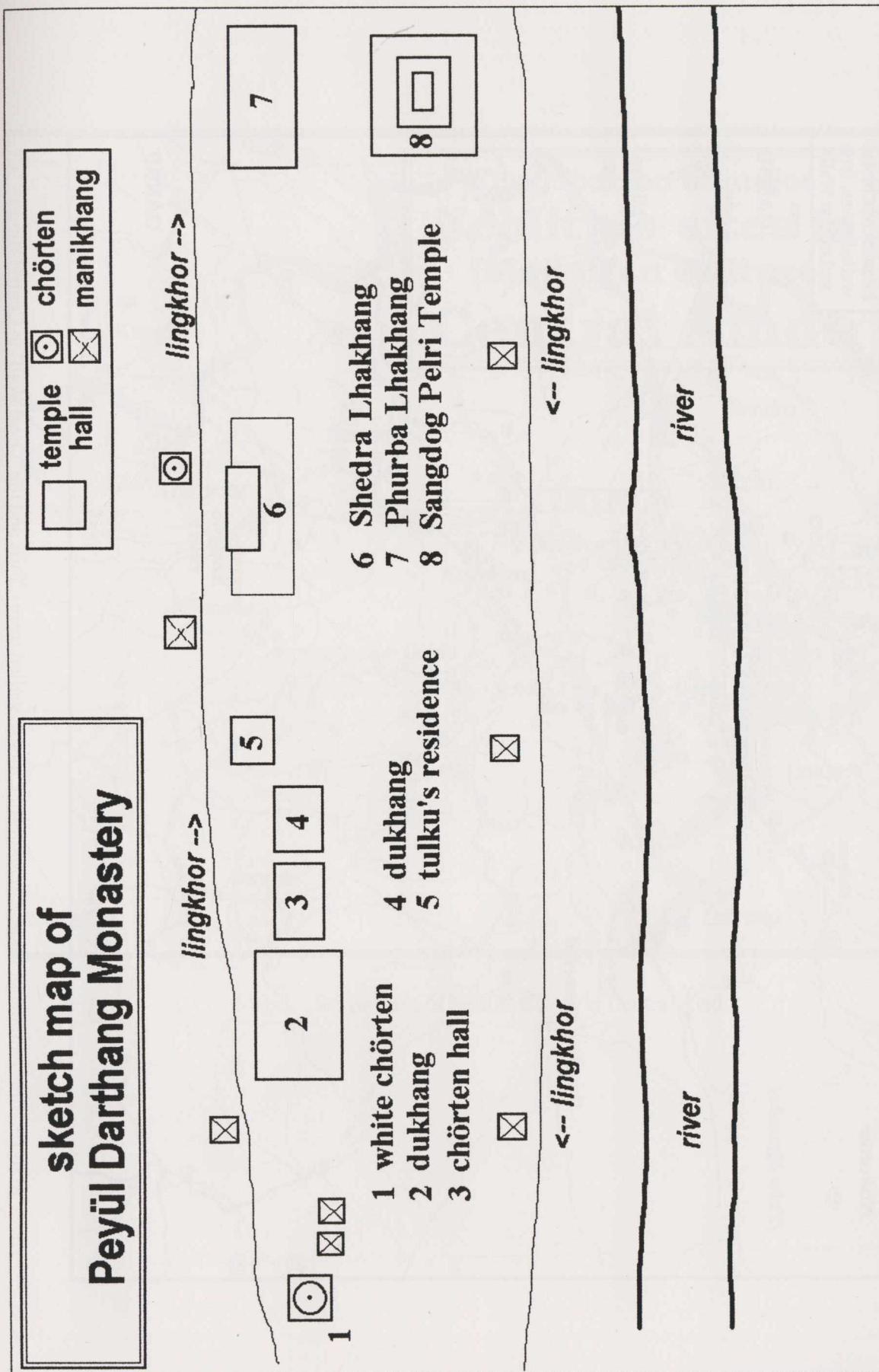


Map 7. Architectural plan of Serkhang Chenmo in Kumbum Monastery

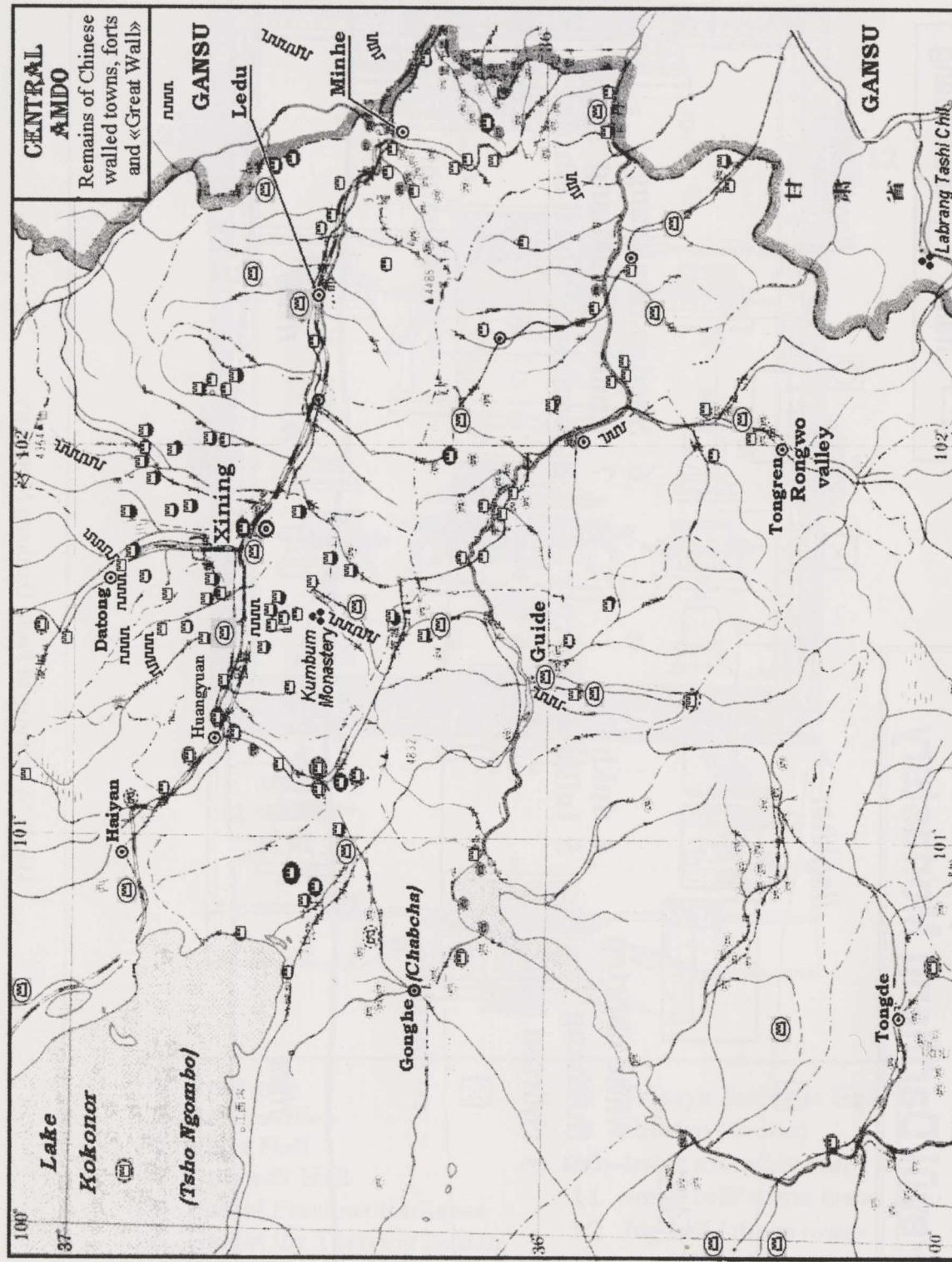


- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 front gate | 8 Trikaya Buddhas Hall |
| 2 stele pavilion | 9 chörten (stupas) |
| 3 Vajra Hall | 10 lesser assembly hall |
| 4 Qutan Si Hall | 11 small bell/ drum tower |
| 5 Hall of Precious Radiance | 12 big bell / drum tower |
| 6 Hall of the Thriving Nation | |
| 7 Hall of the protector deities | 13 corridor with murals |

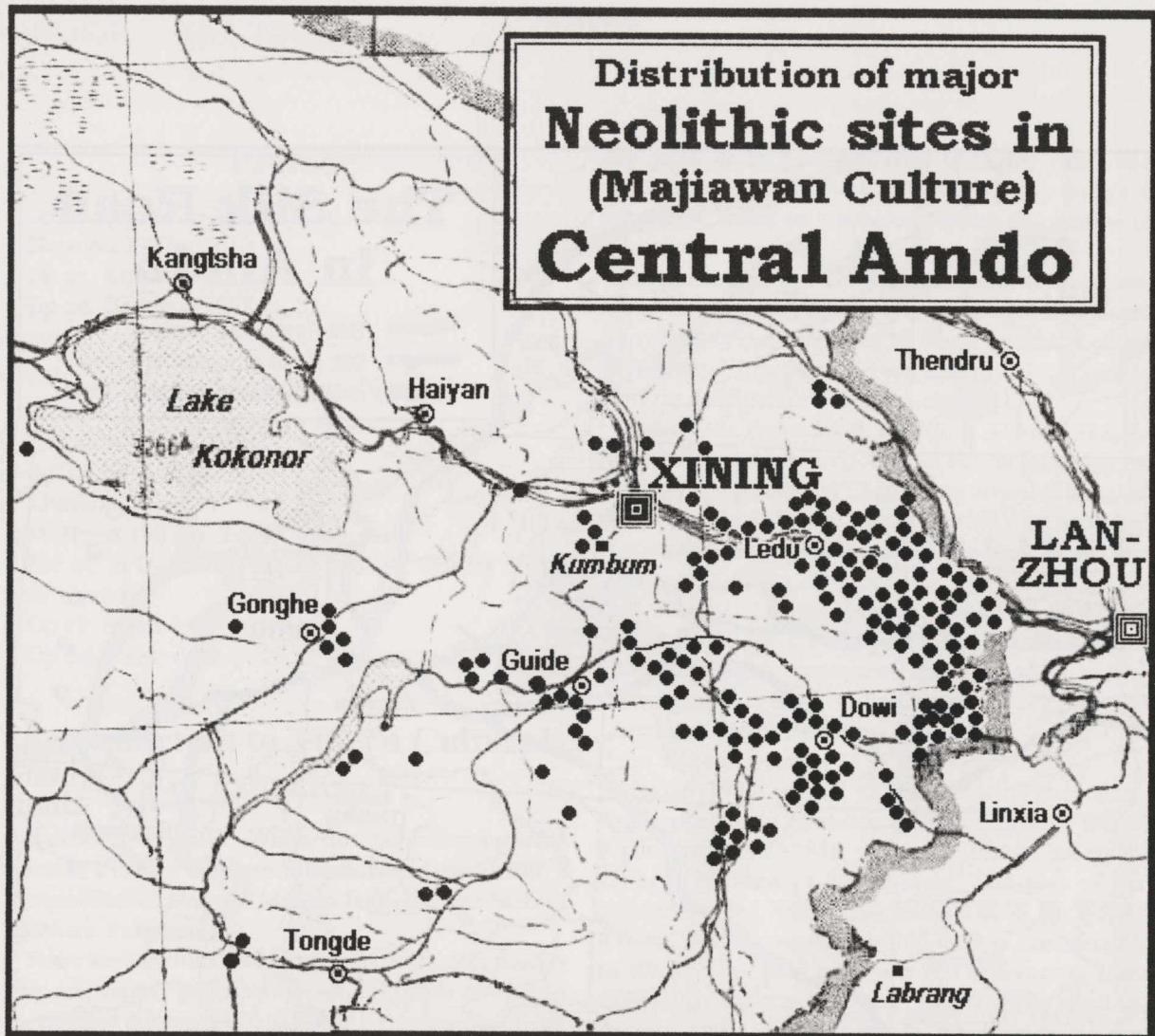
Map 8. Sketch map of Qutan Lamasery



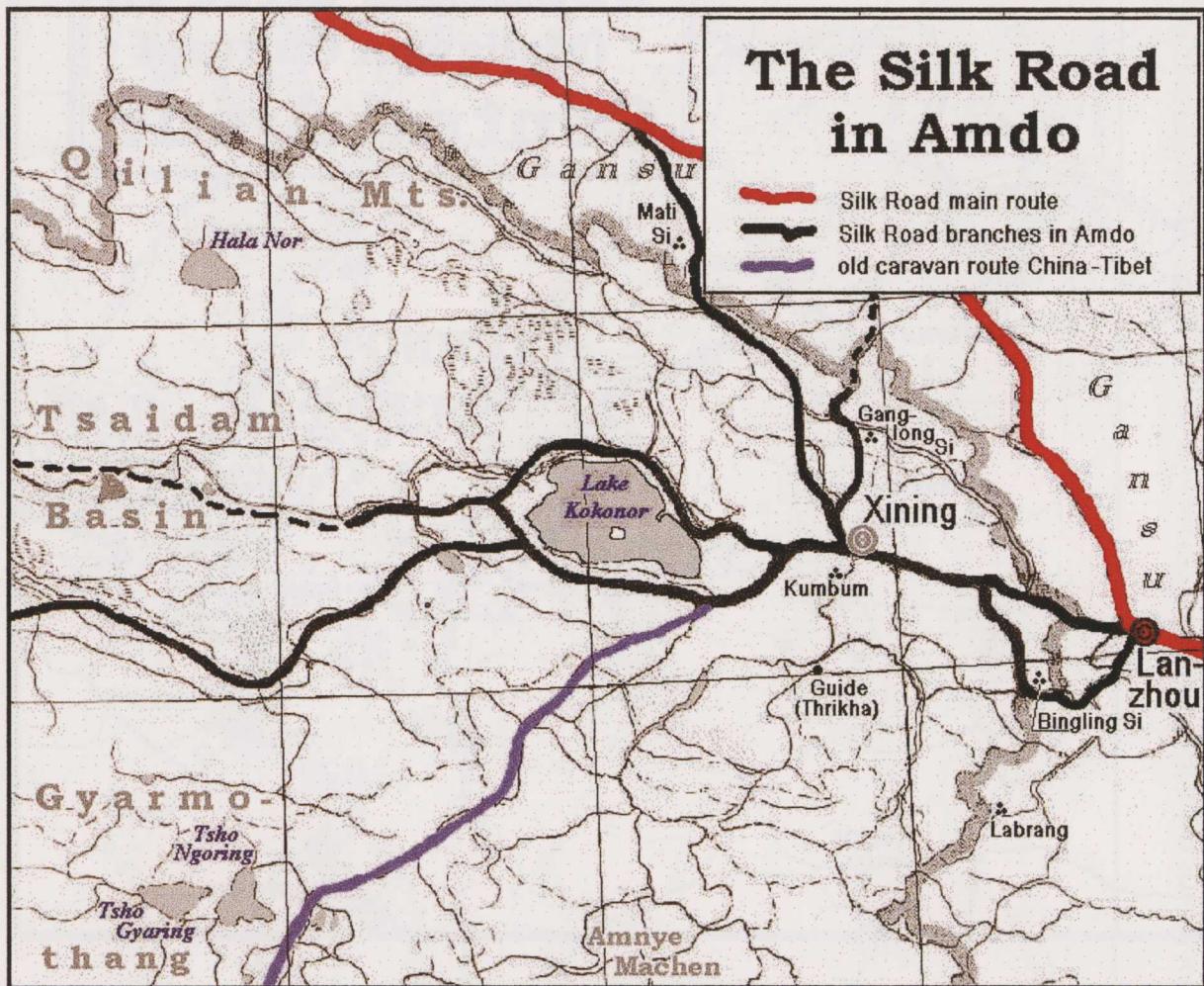
Map 9. Sketch map of Peyü Darthang Monastery



Map 10. Sites with major historic remains of Chinese walled towns, forts and the ‘Great Wall’ in Central Amdo



Map 11. Survey map of Neolithic sites in Central Amdo



Map 12. Silk Road routes in Amdo

Notes

Preface

¹ Op cit. Khosla 1975, pp. 81/83.

² Dujardin 1997, p. 61.

³ Op cit. Khosla 1975, p. 71.

⁴ Op cit. Germano 1998, p. 53.

Introductory Notes

¹ Khosla 1975, p. 71.

² Op. cit., p. 74.

³ Khosla 1975, p. 71.

⁴ M. Henss 1981, p. 29.

⁵ For ex. in Dowman 1988, p. 295; cp. chapter 3.3. of this volume.

⁶ Op cit. Smith 1999, p. 20.

⁷ Op cit. Smith 1999, p. 20.

Introduction to Tibet's Cultural Provinces

¹ Kessler 1982, S.IV. While this definition includes Tibetan tribes in northern Bhutan, Nepal, and India, it disqualifies Tibetans of Muslim faith, like the Balti of northern Pakistan.

² There are a multitude of toponyms designating smaller regions, former principalities or kingdoms as well as landscapes that cannot be accurately associated with one of the regions named here. There is no need to name these explicitly here, as the problem of provinces, namely of Amdo and Kham, will be discussed later in this volume. As to central Tibet cp. Michael Henss (forthcoming).

³ The Nan Shan or Qilian Shan demarcates the borderline between the Tibetan highland and the desert land of the Gobi. Qilian Shan is transcribed *trilen* in Tibetan, and named 'red hills' (*gongbu dmar ru*) in old Tibetan sources. (Karmay 1998, p. 525)

⁴ Gruschke 1997a, pp. 279-286

⁵ It is different regarding the joint term *mdo khams*, which has been an administrative term on provincial level even during the Ming reign of imperial China, occupying the sphere of the Yuan military commission of Tubo (cp. Franke 1981, p. 296; Zimmermann 1998, pp. 10-14). It therefore seems that the use of the term

duo gansi as an administrative unit only came into practice during the Chinese Ming dynasty, though it was surely based on the older Tibetan designation of *mdo khams*.

⁶ Fra Francesco Orazio della Penna di Billi, *Brief Account of the Kingdom of Tibet*, (1730), in: C.R. Markham, *Narratives of the mission of G. Bogle to Tibet*, London 1876, App. III, p. 309.

⁷ Orazio della Penna 1730, loc. cit. p. 313.

⁸ Orazio della Penna 1730, loc. cit. p. 313 and 318. As for this description, Amdo would not be including the Kokonor and (probably) Changthang areas—Chang, cp. della Penna, p. 311—but rather covering what nowadays is considered to be eastern and southeastern Kham plus northeastern Kham, Tebo, cp. loc. cit. p. 313, and the southernmost Ngawa resp. eastern parts of what is today's Amdo, loc. cit.: Tongor (Tangkar) and Kungbung (Kumbum) may represent the Tsongkha valley, Chenisungba is likely to be Chone.

⁹ Op. cit. Karmay 1998, p. 525.

¹⁰ Cp. maps in: Kessler 1983, pp. VI to XI.

¹¹ Kessler 1983, pp. 15, 81-84. Actually, there was a single attempt to establish an administrative unit of Kham, from 1927-1955, not by a Tibetan, but by the Chinese Nationalist government. The area of that province, called Xikang (cp. Samuel 1993, pp. 66, 71, 80) in Chinese, roughly covered what is considered to be Kham today, thus lying between Ü in central Tibet, Qinghai province to the north, Yunnan to the south and the foot of the highland's fringe mountains to the east. Although Xikang was given the status of a regular province in 1939, with the administrative centre at Kangding, theirs was just a more or less nominal authority, especially when approaching the Yangtse river from the east.

¹² Hermanns 1948, p. 6. The alpine steppes of the barren highland are periodically used by Mongolian and Tibetan nomads.

¹³ Cp. Gruschke 1993, p. 44, and 1997a, pp. 279-286; *Minzu zhishi jizui*, Chengdu 1991; *Jianming Qinghai Shouce* 1989, p. 15; GZZG 1986, p. 31; and GSM 1989.

¹⁴ Hermanns 1948, pp. XIff.

¹⁵ Hermanns 1948, pp. XIff.

¹⁶ Samuel 1993, pp. 39-41, 64-114.

¹⁷ First of all it should be noted that the so-called kings of Tibet were actually perceived as emperors (cp. Pelliot 1961, p. 143; Karmay 1998, p. 525), as the term *btsan*

to modern Turkish peoples of central and western Asia. The Hui Muslims' past is recalled by their name, Hui, a remnant of the term *Huihu*, as the medieval Uyghurs were called in Chinese sources. As they played a major role in politics and state affairs during the late Tang dynasty (618-907) of the Chinese Empire, they underwent an early process of sinicization. They lost their own language centuries ago, and Chinese became a *lingua franca* among the various peoples all over northeastern Tibet. Sinicization was both a process of assimilation furthered by governments and acculturation entered upon by the respective tribes themselves. This was also the case with Tibetans in Tsongkha, and not, as modern Tibetan writers assume, just 'carried out by the Chinese Nationalists' (Karmay 1998, p. 528). Similarly we have good reason to believe that among Amdo-Tibetans considerable numbers of other peoples have been 'tibetanized' as well, thus becoming Tibetans.

⁶² Cp. Tafel 1914, vol. II, p. 292. Modern Tibetan historians seem to ignore that the Tibetans living in these areas partially moved into them only very late. According to Karmay (1998, p. 527) it was rather internal quarrels that caused the Mongolian tribes to migrate further.

⁶³ Hermanns 1948, p. 28.

⁶⁴ Hermanns 1948, p. 31.

⁶⁵ Ma Yin et al. 1990, p. 233.

⁶⁶ It is often overlooked that many of the most impressive and famous religious personages of Tibetan cultural history originated from Amdo. By way of example here we may only mention the Kagyüpa scholar Urgyenpa Rinchen Pel (*u rgyan pa rin chen dpal*, 1230-1309), Kadampa master Döndrub Rinchen (*don grub rin chen*, 1309-1385), Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), the founder of the Gelugpa order, 14th Dalai Lama, and 10th Panchen Lama. Some of the most influential incarnate lamas at the Ming and Qing imperial court were Amdowas: Mindröl Khutuktu, Tukvan Khutuktu, Chankya Khutuktu, the 2nd Jebtsündampa Khutuktu in Urga, and the first three Jamyang Lamas of Labrang. (Cp. Yang Guiming & Ma 1992)

⁶⁷ Op. cit. Khosla 1975, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Op. cit. Khosla 1975, p. 78.

⁶⁹ See, for instance: Bell 1987; Hoffmann 1956; Li Anche 1994; Lopez 1997; Rhie & Thurman 1991, 1996; Tucci 1970. As for the symbolism in Tibetan monasteries we recommend an exposé by Khosla (1975).

⁷⁰ Karmay (1998, p. 528) only admits the existence of 'a few Sa-skyapa and bKa'-brgyud-pa monasteries before the arrival of the dGe-lugs-pa order'. The rich and varied monastic life of pre-Gelugpa Amdo is obscured by the circumstance that many of the later Gelugpa lamaseries had originally been established as Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, and Kagyüpa institutions. Many of these had been founded on the initiative of, or supported by, the Ming government of imperial China. Some of the Red sect monasteries can still be found in the more secluded parts

of Amdo, be it in the barren mountains of the Yellow River canyon and the gorges of its tributaries, or in the far south of Amdo where the formidable Ngolok nomads (*ibid.*, p. 525) prevented the old orders from being obliterated.

⁷¹ In the southern and eastern part, Karmay (1998, p. 528) largely over-estimates the role of the Bön faith. While there are certain areas where the Bönpo still have a leading role, mostly in the gorges of northern Gyarong and neighbouring grasslands and hills of Ngawa, Sharkhog and Thewo, the various Red sects of Tibetan Buddhism are still rooted much deeper in southern Amdo. Even the Jonangpa order which was believed to be extinct has survived the central Tibetan suppression since the 17th century.

⁷² Today (1999) more than 1000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples exist in Amdo: about 600 in Qinghai (without Yushu prefecture which is seen as part of Kham), 370 in Gansu, and some 170 in Sichuan (Amdo share of Ngawa and Kandse). (Sources: AZZ, Pu 1996, Ran 1994, and own research findings)

1. Kumbum Jampa Ling

¹ This description of Kumbum monastery is put together from its portrayal in Henss 1981, pp. 231-236, though especially the historical part is further completed here. The bulk of information on the historical and artistic development of the lamasery was taken from Schram 1957 and Xie et al. 1986.

² Huang Shui is the Chinese name of the river that is called *Tsong Chu* in Tibetan. Tibetans are scarcely seen on the river's banks. Rather the area is populated by Hui Muslims, Han-Chinese, Tu-Monguor and, farther on, Tibetans who have long since undergone an acculturation. Hence here we call the river by its Chinese name.

³ By acculturation we mean to refer to a process of cultural exchange that neither led to a unilateral assimilation of a conquered ethnic group, i.e. of the Tibetans, nor was it a passive reception of formerly non-autochthonous cultural features. The problem is too complex to discuss here. We would like at least to hint at the often very obscure Western understanding of what is Chinese (cp. Gruschke 1998), of the relatively young phenomenon of Tibetan nationalism, the problematic role of construed ethnicity and the perception of borders and frontiers. Our introductory notes on the doubtful tangibility of ambiguous terms like Amdo and Kham may already have given a slight idea of the difficulties.

⁴ The life story of Tsongkhapa is well known among general students of Tibet and Tibetan history. So we shall not repeat it here (cp. for instance Gruschke 1996, pp. 194-204 and 211f). For reference to some events needing to be recalled see below (chapter 2.6. for Shadzong Ritrö and 2.5. for Jachung Monastery).

⁵ Schram 1957, p. 23.

⁶ It is true that ‘colour cannot be taken as a reason to name a religious sect’, as criticized by Tshe-bstan Zhabdrung (1989, p. 154), and although the Gelugpa ‘may be called Yellow Hat Sect’ it is noted that: ‘As to the yellow hats, they are used not only by dge-lugs-pa but also by other sects. The same opinion can be found in *History of the dge-lugs Sect* by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho [sic!].’ Though generally being of the same opinion, the author of this volume has stuck to the customary use of the term in Western literature.

⁷ Tucci 1949, pp. 39-46.

⁸ The title Dalai Lama is mostly interpreted as ocean of wisdom. It may also be simply taken as a Mongolian translation of Gyatsho Lama, i.e. the ‘lama with the name of Gyatsho’ (*rgya mtsho*). Cp. E. Wegerer 1991, p. 45, and Dalai Lama 1990, p. 9.

⁹ Op. cit. Tucci 1949, p. 46.

¹⁰ Snellgrove & Richardson 1986, p. 184, explain the change of the Ming emperors’ policies: ‘While the Ming dynasty had been anxious to cultivate a connection with Tibet by means of monastic missions which enjoyed lavish commercial concessions, they viewed with suspicion, at first, and sought to discourage, any initiative by the Mongols to increase their own religious intercourse with Tibet. Later, with the realization that Mongol militancy might be softened by Buddhist influences, Chinese policy changed, and Tibetan lamas who had contacts in China were encouraged to make visits to the Mongol chiefs. Yet the lamas of the older orders do not seem to have displayed much zeal in instructing the Mongols.’ That’s why not only the Gelugpa’s patriarch Sonam Gyatsho took the chance, but also that he entered ‘a mission field which was ready to receive him.’

¹¹ Schram (1957, p. 25) states with reason that ‘it is amazing that neither of them, during their long stay at Kukunor, visited Kumbum (only three days distant), the birthplace of the founder of the sect, or called on Achia, incarnation of the father of Tsong khapa, or took a glance at the first Yellow sect temple and the miraculous tree.’

¹² This first temple is the hall *Byams pa mgon Jo bo khang*, just beside the main gold-tiled Serdong Chenmo. It contains a statue of Maitreya (Jampa, *Byams pa*) filled with relics. As Laufer (foreword of Filchner 1933) implies that Maitreya should not be connected to the images appearing on the leaves of the monastery’s holy tree, he suggests the translation ‘abode of the countless images [of Simhadhvani] and temple of Maitreya’. The name of Buddha Simhadhvani (*Sengge naro* in Tibetan) given here may be related to Tsongkhapa’s biography. Cp. Henss 1981, pp. 267f, notes 1-2.

¹³ However, some relics are supposed to be enshrined within a chörten in Lhasa’s Drepung monastery. Cp. Henss 1981, p. 268, n. 3.

¹⁴ Thus, the name is not given after the eight chörten near the entrance to the monastic complex, as is explained in Schram 1957, p. 25.

¹⁵ Cp. Gruschke 1996, p. 195, Henss 1981, p. 286 n. 4, and Schram 1957, p. 25 n. 61.

¹⁶ Schram 1957, p. 25.

¹⁷ The unusual connection of a Maitreya statue with the name of Jowo (*Jo bo*), shows that this honorific title [cp. Filchner 1933, p. 49] is assigned informally, though it does not firmly contradict using it for certain highly revered images of worship (mostly Shakyamuni). The same title Jowo is used for the Buddha Dipankara in the hall that joins the main hall of Serdong Chenmo on the northern side. (Henss 1981, p. 268 n. 7)

¹⁸ Han & Ma 1990, p. 53.

¹⁹ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 578.

²⁰ Xie et al. 1986, pp. 81f.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 83.

²² Henss (1981, pp. 233 and 268 n. 6) presumes that Chinese influence was a later phenomenon and pushed back Tibetan forms. He supposes that Chinese influence grew after reconstructions had been made, following demolitions occurring during the upsurge against the Chinese emperor in 1723. We should rather understand the architectural evolution in Amdo as a development starting with Chinese architecture (as it was in Mongolia): ‘There was nothing typically Tibetan about the early monasteries.’ (Khosla 1975, p. 76) Later more and more Tibetan elements and structural forms were gradually integrated. Thus we see Kumbum monastery as representing a kind of transitional period still largely dominated by Chinese architectural forms, while Tibetan influence is already shown in the plan of the lamasery and the ornamental details. This will be revealed best with the example of the monastic complex of Qutan Si (chapter 2.1, p. 27-31) the buildings of which date as far back as 1392 and 1418.

²³ Xie et al. 1986, pp. 85f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁵ The advantage of this method is that the painting can be done at the painter’s home—as it is done up to our days in Wutun village near Tongren in Rongwo valley. These paintings can easily be transported to the place needed, may be taken away in case of repairs and—this showed to be important during the Cultural Revolution—could be rolled up and hidden. For details of these Amdo typical wall paintings see the chapter on Rebgong art (cp. chapter 3.3., pp. 55-58).

²⁶ Tibetologists and Tibetans claim this number is the appropriate one before 1950, or else recorded as fully ordained monks, in lists kept in Lhasa and Beijing (Tafel 1914, p. 213). Other writers state for the time before 1950 some 3,000 monks with 70 to 80 incarnated lamas among them. Filchner (in about 1926) mentioned 7,000 monks (!), yet he had probably only guessed, thus adding up all monks and novices belonging to Kumbum

Monastery—including its branches (Henss 1981, p. 268 n. 10).

Actually, all these figures may also be exaggerated, as Schram (1957, p. 55) demonstrates comprehensively: ‘Regarding the excessive number of lamas [here: monks] in one lamasery, it must be borne in mind that the lamas are always prone to exaggerate; for instance, the number 3,000 for Kumbum is not the number of lamas dwelling in the monastery, but the number of parts or ‘shares’ into which the gifts distributed to the lamas are divided. The distribution differs in each monastery. In Kumbum for instance, at each distribution each of the Living Buddhas receives 50 parts, as do the five Fa-t’ais [= khempo]; other officials receive 20, 10, and 5 parts, etc. In this way the actual number of lamas [i.e. monks] is reduced to 2,000.’

²⁷ Xie et al. 1986, p. 94.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 86.

²⁹ Filchner 1933, pp. 274-276.

³⁰ The Tibetan calendar of Amdo is in accordance with the Chinese lunar year rather than with the one of Lhasa. I do not think that this is a mere effect of the stronger Chinese influence in northeastern Tibet, but that it takes the natural conditions into account. The bitter climate and the sunlight rates of Amdo are more likely corresponding to northern China and Inner Mongolia than to southern Tibet, thus having a strong effect upon the agricultural conditions.

³¹ For this reason they are called butter flowers, *suyou hua*, in Chinese. Because of the Chinese lanterns, these celebrations are also named lantern festival.

³² In Kumbum this inner *parikrama* proceeds around the main assembly hall, the courtyard for the Cham dances and the most holy Serkhang Chenmo including its side-buildings. Filchner (1933) uses the word *dKyil ‘khor* that actually means ‘mandala’, but as it is clear that the inner *khora* of the monastery is meant, I use *nangkhor*. Kumbum’s *lingkhor*, the outer *khora* for the daily *khor lam*, leads all around the whole lamasery in a circle four kilometres long.

³³ At the beginning of the 1980s, Kumbum was the only Tibetan monastery within the PR of China where the traditional mask dances could be performed. In the meanwhile this religious practice has again become very common in all the bigger Tibetan monasteries.

³⁴ Xie et al. 1986, p. 99. Lobsang Tendzin (*blo bzan bstan dsin*) was a grandson of Gushri Khan who had helped the 5th Dalai Lama to establish his secular power in Tibet. As he was ‘devising the unification of the Khoshots and the revival in his person of the imperial dream of Gushi, [he] assumed the title of Dalai Hung-T’ichi, and broke into open rebellion against China’ in September, 1723. (Schram 1957, p. 35) This revolt had major consequences for all the monasteries in the Tsongkha area of Amdo; the year 1723-1724 became ‘a turning point in the history of Lamaism in Huang-chung.

... At the time, Lamaism rode the crest of the wave of glory and success, monasteries and their affiliates dotted the country of Hsining’ (*ibid.*, p. 33). But the Mongol rebel ‘obtained the tremendous support of the mKampo Nomun-khan, superior and chief of Kumbum and his nephew, who called all the lamas and Tibetans of Huang-chung to take sides with him’. After the revolt was crushed, by March 1724, Lobsang Tendzin fled. ‘The revolted lamas and tribes were severely punished, and the monasteries destroyed.’ (*ibid.*, p. 35)

³⁵ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 577 and Xie et al. 1986, p. 95.

³⁶ Xie et al. 1986, pp. 97f, also notes a story related to the Panchen Lama.

³⁷ Tafel 1914, I, p. 212.

³⁸ Xie et al. 1986, p. 18.

³⁹ Pu 1989, p. 143. In 1990 Kumbum monks told me the number of 530 monks, while in 1993 they figured them at more than 600.

⁴⁰ Henss 1981, p. 237; cp. Schram 1957, p. 26. Filchner (1914, I, p. 220) noted that the grounds of Kumbum were extra-territorial for Chinese officials. It should be noted though that the formal head of the Gelugpa was and is the Ganden Thrizin, chief abbot of Ganden Monastery near Lhasa. Furthermore, extra-territoriality of monasteries for officials was a common feature in traditionally organized countries, with South Korea, for instance, as a modern example.

⁴¹ That political control of 20th century Amdo lay in the hands of others than the Amdowas is shown by the fact that Tibetans had to pay a big sum of money for the handing over of the 14th incarnation of the Dalai Lama, born near Kumbum. The area was then administered by Muslim warlord Ma Bufang, as was the bulk of Amdo.

2. Lamaseries in Tsongkha

¹ Op. cit. Wylie 1962, p. 110.

² It is the *Dpag bsam ljon bzang* edited by Sarat C. Das in 1908 in Calcutta, cp. Wylie 1962, p. 193 n. 742.

³ The Tibetan word *tsong* means onion; cp. Das 1989, p. 99.

⁴ *Tsong kha mkhar*, Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 582.

⁵ Wylie 1962, p. 193 n. 742: ‘The district of Tsong-kha is now called Huang-chung.’ Wylie is citing Rock 1956, p. 6, though Rock just noted that the new administrative district of Huang-chung (Pinyin spelling: Huangzhong) became a county of its own when the borders of Qinghai province were changed in 1928 (Rock 1956, p. 4). Important for the outlining of the borders of Tsongkha district are the following notes of J.F. Rock (1956 pp. 5, 9, 16, 19) concerning the city of Xining [1] and the counties of Huangzhong [2], Ledu [3], Huzhu [4] and Minhe [5]: [1] ‘Hsi-ning, or Western Peace, the Tibetan Zi-ling, and Sining of Western maps, has been made the capital and its old name has been retained. (...) The ancient name of the town was Huang-chung.’ [2]

'Southwest of Xining is the new district of Huang-chung...' [3] 'In former times, the territory of Lo-tu [Ledu] was the land of Huang-chung...' [4] 'Hu-chu hsien was originally a part of Hsi-ning.' [5] 'In former times, the territory of Min-ho was the land of Huang-chung.'

⁶ S.C. Das 1989, p. 123.

⁷ In older Chinese sources it can appear as Huang He, a name that is easily confused with the Yellow River, who is called Huang He as well, though the Chinese characters for the two Huang He are different.

⁸ This mountain pass is known as the 'Sun and Moon Pass' and separates the living space of the sedentary population in Tsongkha from the pastoral areas of the nomads in the basin of Lake Kokonor.

⁹ Ye 1987, p. 137; Zhu 1987, p. 29. According to the *Tibetan-Chinese comparative dictionary of Kanjur Buddhist classification terms* (Qinghai's Nationality Publishing House, Xining/ Beijing 1992, p. 3) the Chinese term *Qutan* is equivalent to Tibetan *Gutama*, and therefore the lamasery's name refers to the historic Buddha's family name.

¹⁰ As Chen 1987 alleges Dorje Chang as Tibetan equivalent for Qutan, it would be more likely to identify Qutan by Vajradhara, which is the name of the Adibuddha that once was the main statue in Longguang hall of this monastery. Therefore the lamasery's Tibetan name could also be given as Dorje Chang Gompa.

¹¹ Sanluo lama in Chinese. According to Schram 1957, p. 16: San-la lama, who lived until 1414.

¹² Xie et al. 1986, p. 7; Li Zonghua et al. 1992, pp. 122, 143f; cp. Schram 1957, p. 16.

¹³ Li Zonghua et al. 1992, p. 120.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 144.

¹⁵ Xie et al. 1986, p. 7; Li Zonghua et al. 1992, pp. 122, 143f; cp. Schram 1957, p. 16.

¹⁶ Xie, *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁷ Chen 1987, p. 123.

¹⁸ Xie et al., p. 8.

¹⁹ Time not specified; cp. Schram 1957, p. 23.

²⁰ Nianbei (in Pinyin), spelled Nien-pe in older sources, is today's Ledu County town.

²¹ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 583.

²² Kuan Yu-Chien & Petra Häring-Kuan, *China. Kunst- und Reiseführer mit Landeskunde*, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz 1983, 1986, p. 162.

²³ In Chinese: *Randeng Fo*.

²⁴ Op. cit. Schram 1957, pp. 21f.

²⁵ Here it should be remembered that Ming Emperor Taizu had designated his grandson, Huidi (Hui-ti in Wade-Giles' spelling), to succeed to the throne in 1399. After three years, Huidi's uncle Chengzu usurped the throne and Huidi perished in a conflagration of the palace. A note in historical records states that Huidi escaped, disguised as a lama, and wandered incognito from monastery to monastery in south and southwest

China. (Schram 1957, pp. 21f)

²⁶ According to the local tradition of Hongshan Si [Hung-shan-ssu], the emperor was buried in their monastery and not in Qutan Lamasery, as it is claimed by the latter's lamas. In Hongshan Si 'they have the visitor admire their own ruined tower built over a well and their own old tree enclosed in their temple. These honored trees, enclosed by a temple, point to the tree of Kumbum which sprouted from the afterbirth of Tsong Khapa buried in Kumbum...' (Schram 1957, p. 22)

²⁷ Schram (1957, p. 23) notes that the terrace 'is said to have been built according to the pattern of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing (built in 1420)'. It is remarkable that the relationship between the capital Beijing and this part of Amdo was so close, that the very same type of architecture was erected in two places so far from each other, in ethnically so different areas, more or less at the same time.

²⁸ Many people consider the clock-wise circumambulation of sacred sites as being typical for the entire Buddhist world. This is a delusion due to the misconception that ordinary Buddhist practice generally corresponds to what the faithful of Tibetan Buddhism are doing. A visit in Southeast Asia, such as to Laos and Cambodia, will demonstrate to the observer that Buddhists there often do their parikrama in a counter-clockwise direction. The clock-wise *khora* must be taken as a typical feature of Tibetan Buddhists, grown out of the desire to distinguish themselves from, and stand out against, Bönpo believers.

²⁹ If not specially referred to a certain source, information about this monastery was mainly given in place, personally to the author, or taken from Xie et al. 1986, pp. 56-61, HTZG, pp. 26f, and Liu & Li 1992, p. 904. According to Schram (1957, p. 27), Rgolong is the mother monastery of all monasteries north of the Tsong Chu - Huang Shui river.

³⁰ *Huar*, also called *shaonian*, or *Hua'er* is the Chinese word for flower, but here signifies a kind of folk song sung by the Tu people in the fields during or after work.

³¹ Cp. Schröder 1953, p. 255 and Schram 1957, p. 27.

³² Schram 1957, p. 27.

³³ *Chang-chia* in Chinese (Pinyin spelling: *Zhangjia*) is *lCan skyā* in Tibetan.

³⁴ Schram 1957, p. 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Schram 1954, pp. 33, 128f, 135f.

³⁷ Schram 1957, p. 37.

³⁸ Xie et al. 1986, pp. 56f.

³⁹ Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 24; continuing: 'In 1553 a war broke out with Galdan monastery. In 1621-1631 Mongols were called in by the Dalai Lama to rescue his sect, but the Mongol Nairamduhu, an adherent of the Red sect, fled from Mongolia to Kukunor in 1633 and persecuted the Yellow sect which had spread.' Further cp. Tucci 1949, I, pp. 39-46, Schuleman 1911, p.

132 and Huth 1896, pp. 51, 248-253.

⁴⁰ Xie et al. 1986, pp. 56f; Pu 1990, p. 75.

⁴¹ Cp. chapter 2.6. and chapter 1, note 26.

⁴² Pu 1990, p. 76.

⁴³ Schram 1954, p. 136, and 1957, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Wei 1993, p. 575.

⁴⁵ Schröder 1953, p. 256 and Schram 1957, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 580) notes that the 'monks are almost entirely of Tu descent, but all speak Amdo Tibetan as well as Chinese.' We were similarly informed, but it may be that our informants (Chinese-speaking Tu people) meant Lhasa dialect of the Tibetan language.

⁴⁷ Schröder 1953, p. 255.

⁴⁸ Cp. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 38, calls the *tshogs shing* an 'assembly tree of deities and saints'. It portrays, roughly in the form of a genealogical tree, the main teachers, dharmapalas and yidams of the respective Tibetan-Buddhist school, arranged around a major teacher or the founder of the order. The Gelugpa's *tshogs shing*, for instance, depicts the founder Tsongkhapa in its centre.

⁴⁹ According to Schröder 1953, p. 255, *dšamba* is the Tu pronunciation of the Tibetan *byams pa* (Jampa = Maitreya).

⁵⁰ Ming dynasty's Xuande reign (1426-1435).

⁵¹ Schröder 1953, p. 257.

⁵² Heissig 1954, p. 28, according to Schram 1957, p. 30, n. 101.

⁵³ Wei 1993, p. 575.

⁵⁴ Pu 1990, p. 77, Schram 1957, p. 32; Xie et al. 1986, p. 58. On the development of the incarnations of Chankya Khutukhtu, Tuguan Khutuktu and Sumpa Khutuktu and their concise biographies see Schram 1957, pp. 29-33.

⁵⁵ During the time of the 3rd Sumpa Khutukhtu, the monastery of Rgolong is said to have had 22 incarnate lamas and more than 7,000 monks. (Xie et al. 1986, p. 58) For further discussion of these numbers cp. chapter 2.6.7. and chapter 1, note 26.

⁵⁶ Main sources for Guomang Si are, besides information given in place: Xie et al. 1986, pp. 52f, and Pu 1990, pp. 9-12.

⁵⁷ This is probably the same mountain that is called Tag Ri (*stag ri*) by Tibetans as written in Wylie 1962, p. 109.

⁵⁸ Wylie 1962, p. 195 n. 757.

⁵⁹ See chapter 1, note 34.

⁶⁰ Schram 1957, p. 33.

⁶¹ Schröder 1954, p. 255.

⁶² Wylie 1962, p. 195 n. 757 and Xie Zuo et al. 1986, p. 52.

⁶³ The full Tibetan title being '*dzam gling chen po'i rgyas bshad bcud kun gsal me long zhes bya ba*', Wylie regards this work as 'perhaps the only original Tibetan work dealing with the geography of Tibet in toto'. Cp. Schram 1957, p. 33, and Wylie 1962, pp.

XIII, 195 n. 757.

⁶⁴ Wylie 1962, p. 109.

⁶⁵ Tafel 1914, I, p. 244.

⁶⁶ See chapter 1, note 25.

⁶⁷ Cp. note 48.

⁶⁸ The correct spelling is still unknown, as we also cannot tell to which Sanskrit name the designations correspond. Amdo pronunciation, especially among Tu people, is very different from Lhasa Tibetan. Thus the 30 monks (1997) of Guanghui Si corrected my pronunciation of the words Damchö Ling (*dam chos gling*, monastery) of the lamasery's Tibetan name to something like damche laeng.

⁶⁹ Rockhill [1891] 1988, p. 47.

⁷⁰ This is one of the places which were left unidentified by Wylie (1962, pp. 110 and 196, n. 765) in his translation of Lama Tszenpo's Tibetan geography.

⁷¹ Cp. Gruschke 1996, pp. 181-183.

⁷² Butön, cit. in Obermiller 1932/ Reprint 1986, p. 201; cp. Roerich 1949, I, pp. xvii, 63-67.

⁷³ Op. cit. Obermiller 1932/ Reprint 1986, pp. 201f.

⁷⁴ Lachen Gewa Rabsal or Gongpa Rabsal is supposed to have lived from 832 to 915, but he may also have been born in 892 and died in 975. Another possible date for his death is 1035. Cp. Gruschke 1996, p. 207, and Roerich 1949, I, pp. xvii, Wylie 1962, p. 196.

⁷⁵ Op. cit. Wylie 1962, p. 110.

⁷⁶ CMCR 1996, p. 98; Liu 1987, p. 18; Pu 1990, p. 79.

⁷⁷ Wylie 1962, p. 192 n. 735. Lhasa pronunciation is Jakhyung Shedrub Ling. The articulation of the Chinese name *Xiaqiong Si* or *Xiaqun Si* is closer to the local Amdo dialect pronunciation of *bya khyung*. Pu (1990, table of contents p. 7 and p. 88) gives the monastery's full name as *bya khyung dgon theg chen yon tan dar rgyas gling*.

⁷⁸ Zhu et al. 1987, p. 52.

⁷⁹ It is the only large Tibetan monastery the author knows (after having visited some 300-400 monasteries all over the Tibetan Highland) the ridge location of which the site and views can be compared to the situation of Ganden. [A.Gr.]

⁸⁰ Wylie 1962 p. 192 ns. 735 and 736; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 22-24.

⁸¹ Ye 1987, p. 139. Another tradition sees the beginning of Shyachung Gompa as a foundation of the 2nd Karmapa Karma Pakshi (1203-1282). (Schram 1957, p. 14). However, all other available sources relate it to the Kadampa tradition.

⁸² Xie et al. 1986, p. 22.

⁸³ HHZG 1984, p. 180.

⁸⁴ Cp. David-Néel 1955, pp. 80-82.

⁸⁵ David-Néel 1955, pp. 81f, tells the legend of the gompa's founding.

⁸⁶ Xie et al. 1986, p. 23.

⁸⁷ Gyurme Dorje (1996, pp. 588f) notes that the destroyed original would once have held hair relics of Tsong-

khapa—which could not be verified in other sources.

⁸⁸ Rockhill 1894, p. 87.

⁸⁹ Cp. chapter 3.3, pp. 55-58.

⁹⁰ Main sources for Shyachung Gompa are: Pu 1990, pp. 88-92, Xie et al. 1986, pp. 22-24, and Zhu 1987, pp. 52f.

⁹¹ As Shaychung Gompa was associated with Sera monastery near Lhasa, the study institute used Sera teaching materials. But when, in 1772, Rgolong's incarnated lama Chubsang Ngawang Thubten Wangchu (1725-1796) spent some 4,000 silver Tael to have a dukhang with 126 pillars constructed, Shyachung put itself under the guidance of Rgolong Lamasery and became one of the latter's subordinate monasteries. (Pu 1990, p. 90)

⁹² Pu 1990, pp. 89-91 and Xie et al. 1986, p. 23.

⁹³ CMCR 1996, p. 109; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 23f.

⁹⁴ Rockhill 1894, p. 87; Pu 1990, p. 89, Ye 1987, p. 139. Schram (1957, p. 15) spoke of two or three hundred lamas, i.e. Tibetan monks (actually: trapas, *grva pa*).

⁹⁵ Our thoughts are mainly based on Schram 1957, pp. 8-21, and Li 1992, pp. 51f, 75-78, 104-110, 136-139, and 180-182.

⁹⁶ Main sources are: CMCR 1996, Li 1992, Ye 1987, and Zhu 1987.

⁹⁷ The temple is also called Beichan Si, Tulouguan, and is identical with the Yongxing Si during the times of Ming dynasty. Although nowadays it is a Daoist temple, it was a Buddhist monastery for most of the time, probably after 520 until the Qing dynasty. (Cp. Schram 1957, pp. 8f)

⁹⁸ Founded as *Xiping ting* in the Early Han dynasty in 121 BC, later names of that city were *Qingtang* (until Song 11th century) and *Shanzhou* (1099) until it finally was renamed *Xining zhou* in 1104.

⁹⁹ Liangzhou (Liang-chou in Wade-Giles' spelling) developed to today's city of Wuwei in the western part of Gansu province.

¹⁰⁰ See note 98.

¹⁰¹ Cp. chapter 2.4., pp. 38-39.

¹⁰² Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Schram 1957, p. 16. It will become evident in this volume that direct administrative control of Amdo in the Chinese Ming era did not reach much farther than the Tsongkha area, with a certain sphere of influence around it. [Cp. Schram 1954, p. 135] Yet the flourishing of the Yellow sect in Tsongkha, on the other hand, has rather more to do with Chinese imperial support than with immediate central Tibetan influence. As Schram (1957, p. 33) ascribes 'in Mongolia the fervor of converted old adherents of the Red sect to the Yellow sect ... in great part to the influence of the Monguor [i.e. Tu] lamas', this may also prove true in the Tsongkha area of northeastern Tibet.

¹⁰⁴ Schram 1954, p. 136.

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 33. Hsining River (Pinyin:

Xining He) is another name of Huang Shui or Tsong Chu.

¹⁰⁶ In Minhe county, out of 55 monasteries not a single one belongs to an order other than the Gelugpa. We have the same situation in Ledu (31 monasteries), Ping'an (6), Huangzhong (circa 30), while two of 15 gompas in Huzhu and four of 34 in Hualong county belong to the Nyingma tradition. (Cp. Pu 1996, pp. 16f, 47f, 69, 74, 87f, 140, 155).

¹⁰⁷ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 588.

¹⁰⁸ CMCR 1996, p. 97; Pu 1996, pp. 83-85; Schram 1957, pp. 33-37; Wylie 1962, pp. 109, 195 n. 759; Xie et al. 1986, p. 63.

¹⁰⁹ Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Schram 1957, pp. 36f. Relations between Chubsang Gon and its former mother monastery Rgolong were cut off, and the Chankya Khutuktu, though co-proprietor of Rgolong's initial domain, lamasery and branches, never visited it again.

¹¹¹ Prejevalsky 1876, pp. 70f.

¹¹² See chapter 5.4.1, pp. 101.

¹¹³ In Chinese language only: Pu 1996.

¹¹⁴ Pu 1996, pp. 17f.

¹¹⁵ Pu 1996, pp. 24f.

¹¹⁶ This is to be supposed as the monastic complex still exhibited a drum tower (MHT 1986, p. 56) in the 1950s. Drum and bell towers are typical elements of Chinese-style monasteries and are totally missing in genuine Tibetan architecture.

¹¹⁷ Pu 1996, pp. 35f.

¹¹⁸ Pu 1996, pp. 37f.

¹¹⁹ Pu 1996, pp. 39f, Xie et al. 1986, p. 75.

¹²⁰ Cp. chapter 2.1, p. 27-31.

¹²¹ Pu 1996, pp. 52f.

¹²² Pu 1996, pp. 56f.

¹²³ Its Chinese name *Xiajun Si* is easily confounded with *Xiaqun Si*, one of the Chinese names of Shyachung Gompa (cp. chapter 2.5, pp. 39-42) near the Yellow River in Hualong county. A similar problem exists with the other names *Xiazong Si* (Shadzong Ritrö) and *Xiaqiong Si* (Shyachung Gompa).

¹²⁴ The Chinese text here writes *zong*, which in Xie et al. (1987, p. 40) is explained as a 'natural chasm' or 'natural moat' (*tianqian*). This is meant by the Tibetan term *rang byung* 'obs chen' or, shortly, *djung* (*djung*). According to Das (1902a, p. 1163) *rang byung* means 'self-sprung', thus signifying 'natural' (Zhang Y. 1993, vol. II, p. 2650). Hence it is not evident whether the meaning of *byung* is 'natural chasm'. Yet, there is a self-sprung stupa, *rang byung mchod rten*, in Mustang (Henss 1993 p. 139), a Tibetan area in northwestern Nepal, which is located in the cliffs of such a natural chasm, say canyon, so it is plausible that [*rang*] *byung* may be taken as such, at least in Amdo dialect, although it is not explained in the dictionary of Hua & kLu-'bum 1993 either.

¹²⁵ Cp. David-Néel 1955, p. 78, Roerich 1949, p. 504. In the Blue Annals Shadzong Ritrö is spelled as *Shar sdong ri khrod*.

¹²⁶ CMCR 1996, p. 16; Pu 1996, pp. 69f; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 40f.

¹²⁷ *stong 'khor mdo rgyud rgya mtsho*. Cp. Yang & Ma 1992, pp. 285-287.

¹²⁸ Pu 1996, pp. 155f, Xie et al. 1986, pp. 68f.

¹²⁹ According to a local legend (Xie et al. 1986, p. 1) there was a temple here as early as during the late Han dynasty, built in 220 by a monk named Tang.

¹³⁰ Pu 1996, pp. 158f, Xie et al. 1986, pp. 1-3.

¹³¹ Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 6. Schram lived in the area of Xining as a missionary from 1911 to 1922.

¹³² The main reason for this permanent tendency of monastic communities to grow, Goldstein explained by the dominant goal of the Tibetan religious leadership—the superior aim of propagating Buddhism. ‘This religious ideology took two major concrete forms: the ruler of the state was an incarnate lama; and the religiosity of the state was measured by the size of its monastic community. (...) The monks’ commitment to a large-scale, rather than an elite, monasticism implicitly meant a decision to recruit and sustain many monks who, on the average, were of low quality.’ (Goldstein 1993, p. 816)

¹³³ Op. cit. Schram 1954, p. 136.

¹³⁴ Op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 60.

¹³⁵ Cp. Schram 1957, p. 15 (Shyachung: fights between Gelugpa and Nyingmapa in 1916; killing of gold-diggers), pp. 23f (Qutan Si/ Yaocaitai 1885-1905 Gelugpa-Gelugpa fights with two monks killed), pp. 34f (1723-1724 military support of Lobzang Tendzin’s revolt against the Qing court), pp. 36-38 (disputes in Rgolong between different incarnate lamas in 1729, 1872 and 1890), p. 46 (monks as ‘loan sharks’), p. 53 (Kumbum monks’ attack in 1895).

¹³⁶ Op. cit. Schram 1954, p. 136.

¹³⁷ Schram 1957, p. 55.

¹³⁸ This is about a third of the 235 monasteries counted in 1928 when the province of Qinghai was created, and comparably around a fifth of the total monks then, the 1948 figure being 26, 534. (Schram 1957, p. 55)

3. Rongwo Monasteries and Rebgong art

¹ Including the valleys of Karong, Yarong and Derong (*bde rong*) in the upper, Tshorong (*mtsho rong*), Barong (*ba'rong*) and Serong (*bse rong*) at the middle and Theurong (*the'u rong*), Nourong (*no'u rong*) and Gurong (*dgu rong*) at the lower reaches. (PRHA 1989, p. 292)

² *reb gong phyogs pa bchu gnyis* (PRHA 1989, p. 292, n. 2).

³ In Chinese: *Huangnan zangzu zizhi zhou*, Huangnan

meaning ‘south of (-nan) the River (*Huang* standing for Huang He = Yellow River)’. For reasons of affiliation with monasteries and pastoral regions, Rongwo is often seen here as comprising the area of today’s counties of Xunhua, Guide, Tongde and Guinan. (PRHA 1989, p. 292)

⁴ Wylie 1962, p. 106.

⁵ Rongwo Tibetans are mainly sedentary farmers living in the Gu Chu river basin and its nine side-valleys. Cp. Gyurme Dorje 1996, pp. 592f, Roerich 1958, pp. 4f and Tafel 1914, I, p. 168 (Bayan rong ting).

⁶ Main sources for Rongwo Gönchen are, besides information given in place: HZZG 1985, pp. 145-147, Xie et al. 1986, pp. 47-49, PRHA 1989, pp. 292-317, and Pu 1990, pp. 431-434.

⁷ *Baihu* (lit. ‘a hundred households’) is a military and administrative division of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, subordinate to *qianhu* and *wanhu* (myriarchy, ‘ten thousand households’; see note 86). Cp. Hucke 1978.

⁸ *Ta'ku shi* in Tibetan (PRHA 1989, pp. 293). English: ‘Great State Tutor’.

⁹ Amnye Machen, see chapter 4.1., p. 73-75. Amnye Shyachung is a sacred peak some 20 km east of Rongwo.

¹⁰ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 595.

¹¹ Main sources for Wutun monasteries and Rebgong art are, besides information given in place: PRHA 1989, pp. 326f, 331, Pu 1990, pp. 434-436, Shu 1987, and Zhu 1988, pp. 46-50.

¹² This is what we have seen in 1990, while Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 595) notes: ‘Alongside the assembly hall is a temple dedicated to the Buddhas of the Three Times, in which the enormous figures of the three Buddhas are flanked by eight standing bodhisattvas.’

¹³ The Tibetan word *Thretse* (*khre tse*) seems to be a slightly modified form of Chinese *zhaizi*, ‘village(s)’, meaning the five Wutun villages as explained in the introduction to this chapter. (PRHA 1989, p. 322)

¹⁴ The Tibetan word *rong* actually means valley*, farmland, agricultural area**, while the suffix *wo* (-*po*)*** designates certain adjectives or nouns (Das 1902a, pp. ***877, *1193; Hua 1993, p. **544). Consequently, Rongwo just hints at the land in valleys where farming is possible—in contrast to the pastoral areas all around—thus being a clear perspective of the nomads of upper Amdo.

¹⁵ Shu 1987, pp. 95f, Zhu 1988, pp. 46-50.

¹⁶ It should be noted that in China proper all the areas south of the Yangtse River (Chang Jiang) are considered as South China, and thus immigrants originating from places near the middle reaches of the Yangtse would be associated with the south although geographically they would belong to China’s central regions.

¹⁷ Even today, there are a dozen or so monasteries within a range of ten kilometres from Longwu township. Pu (1990, p. 430) lists 35 monasteries for Tongren county

alone, 30 of them belonging to the Gelugpa and five to the Nyingmapa traditions.

¹⁸ Op. cit. Shu 1987, p. 95.

¹⁹ Ye 1987, p. 150.

²⁰ Tucci 1941, pp. 16-21. ‘The desire of the artists to enter into history and to be mentioned in the inscriptions is not new in the Indo-Tibetan world. ... the coming up of the names of artists in such great numbers points to a humanistic efflorescence that perhaps did have a long duration in Tibet. Painting is no longer understood as an act of mere devotion; the artist acquires the conscience of being not only an instrument but a creator. He knows that the work he is working at bears the signs of his soul and his intelligence.’ [pp.20f]

²¹ Stoddard 1997, pp. 245f.

²² Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 595.

²³ In 1994 and 1996 the author has seen thangkas of Rebgong origin in monasteries in the Ladakh and Spiti regions of the Indian states Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. When asking the monks about the provenance of those works, they first mentioned Amdo, yet to some of them the term Rebgong was well known.

²⁴ Ye 1987, p. 150.

²⁵ Until today, Rebgong art is hardly mentioned in any Western publication on Tibet. One of the commendable exception is Gyurme Dorje’s *Tibet Handbook*. He viewed the Sengeshong Art Schools (i.e. the workshops in and around Wutun monasteries) merely as ‘two renowned painting schools of Repkong’ [1996, p. 595], thus neglecting the significant craftsmanship of Rebgong sculpture.

²⁶ Op. cit. Shu 1987, p. 96.

²⁷ Tucci 1949, p. 284.

²⁸ Tucci 1949, pp. 283 and 285.

²⁹ Tucci 1949, p. 285.

³⁰ Rieh 1991, p. 65.

³¹ Shu 1987, p. 96.

³² It dates from Qing dynasty (1644-1911); photo in QW 1994, cat. No.212, p. [126]. The body of the wooden statue is framed by an aureole inlaid with agate and topaz.

³³ The picture depicts an elephant, a monkey, a hare, and a pheasant underneath a peach tree. The harmony is symbolized by their co-operation in harvesting the fruits of the tree.

³⁴ Geographically this lacks any foundation, and from the ethnic point of view Linxia is totally void of a significant Tibetan population. In Tibetan perspective it belongs to [A]mdo, though, but rather in its sense of lower land than as a part of an area of Tibetan settlement. (cp. introduction to this volume). For Tibet’s ethnography cp. Gruschke 1997a.

³⁵ Obviously these paintings have survived the troubles of the Cultural Revolution because the communists may have seen them as a testimony of the class antagonisms

of the old society.

³⁶ Exhibition rooms and a workshop have been attached to the institute by now.

³⁷ Jigme deceased in the early 1990s (Gyurme Dorje 1996), and Gyatsho was already more than 80 years old by then.

³⁸ Main sources: HHZG 1984, pp. 181f, Pu 1990, pp. 110-112, Sherab 1989, pp. 104-113, Xie et al. 1986, p. 6.

³⁹ A Drubkhang (*grub khang*) of Urgyen Pema (*u rgyan padma*), cp. Wylie 1962, p. 193, n. 739.

⁴⁰ For the latter see Baima Si of Martsang Drag in chapter 2.4. (pp.38-39). There the story of the three Buddhist monks and of their disciples is told. See as well Gruschke 1996, pp. 181-183.

⁴¹ *mu zugs gsal 'ras* (cp. Sherab 1989, p. 105) is the Mu-s’ug-la-bar of Butön (Obermiller 1932, Reprint 1986 p. 201).

⁴² Sherab 1989, p. 105. This explanation of Den-tig could neither be verified by Das 1902a, Jäschke 1998 nor Hua 1993.

⁴³ Kan-chou or Ganzhou in Pinyin spelling is an oasis and old trade centre on the Silk Road, equivalent to today’s city of Zhangye in Gansu province.

⁴⁴ *deb ther sngon po* [Blue Annals], II, pp. 65f; op. cit. Schram 1957, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Kumbum and Rgolong, see the chapters 1. and 2.2.

⁴⁶ Op. cit. Sherab 1989, p. 106

⁴⁷ That is to say to distinguish the Dharma traditions passed on through both northeastern (Amdo) and western Tibet (Ngari).

⁴⁸ According to this tradition, stress is put on the circumstance that Buddhism’s Second Propagation in central Tibet first came from Amdo rather than from western Tibet. Sherab (1989, p. 109) notes that one of Lu-me’s four main disciples, a *Zhang sna nams rdo rje dbang phyugs*, established the monastery of *Rgyal lha khang* near today’s Reting monastery in Ü (*dbUs*) in 1012—that is to say three decades before Atisha came to Tibet (1042). This is confirmed in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949, p. 88) as well as in Butön (without date, cp. Obermiller 1932, Reprint 1986, p. 204). Other temples or monasteries had been founded by Lu-me himself and by his pupils (dito, p. 204)—among them Tangboche gompa in the Chonggye valley (Cp. Sherab 1989, p. 109; Obermiller 1932, Reprint 1986, pp. 204f)

⁴⁹ Op. cit. Sherab 1989, pp. 107-109.

⁵⁰ See note 40.

⁵¹ Cp. for ex. Baumann 1991, p. 274; Först 1989, p. 36; Gyaltshen Gyaltag 1988, p. 79.

⁵² See note 48. Cp. Stein 1972 [German ed. 1993, pp. 75-77], Batchelor 1987, p. 20.

⁵³ *yul mdo smad kyi ljongs su thub bstan rin po che ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa deb ther rgya mtsho*, completed in 1865; PRHA 1989, p. 214. His name’s

Tibetan spelling is *brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas*.

⁵⁴ The concept of a *Dragon King* is a term typical for Chinese and related mythologies, while the Tibetan term Lü (*klu*) is often linked up with the Indian *Naga*. These concepts are of a similar origin, and the way of depiction depends very much on the closeness of contact to neighbouring regions. Lü in the form of a Dragon(King) therefore are not uncommon in Amdo, and this is the reason why the term is used here in English as well.

⁵⁵ Sherab 1989, p. 110.

⁵⁶ In spite of the shrine's small size, the Lü or Dragon King is considered to be Dentig's primary god to whom is shown reverence, for instance by the fact that locals often choose names like Lügya (*klu rgya*) or Lügyal Tshering (*klu rgyal tshe ring*), thus hoping that the god might grant them a happy life.

⁵⁷ PRHA 1989, p. 213, op. cit. upon Sherab 1989, p. 105.

⁵⁸ (1910-1985); see Tsheten Gompa in chapter 2.6.3., p. 45.

⁵⁹ Main sources for Xunhua county, the Salar and Tibetan populations of the area are: Muchi 1995, pp. 437-440; Pu 1990, pp. 115f; and XSZX 1984, pp. 22-53.

⁶⁰ XSZX 1984, pp. 45f, 50f.

⁶¹ Main sources: PRHA 1989, p. 345; Pu 1990, pp. 129-132.

⁶² In 1958 there were 151 monks, with their number dropping to 13 soon after that. Again there were 71 in 1964, three before Gori Dratshang's destruction (1967).

⁶³ For Sherab Gyatsho's biography see (in Chinese): Yang & Ma 1992, pp. 367-375.

⁶⁴ Main sources: PRHA 1989, p. 344; Pu 1990, pp. 135f.

⁶⁵ In the PRHA (1989, p. 344) just 80 siddhas are mentioned, but we assume a certain inexactitude of oral accounts which tend to generalize figures. It is most likely the 84 Mahasiddhas are meant whose biographies are preserved in Tibetan translation.

⁶⁶ Main sources: CMCR 1996, p. 124; PRHA 1989, pp. 341-344; Pu 1990, pp. 116-122; Pu 1991b, pp. 95-104; Xie et al. 1986, p. 73.

⁶⁷ In 1989, the figure of 400 monks was given, yet one year after just 277 monks and one lama. In the mid-1980s Pu (1990, p. 122) noted 148 to 220.

⁶⁸ Main sources: HZZG 1985, pp. 147f, Pu 1990, pp. 477f, Xie et al. 1986, pp. 43-45.

⁶⁹ Cp. chapter 2.6.5., p. 62 and n. 165 (Ping'an: Shadzong Ritrö).

⁷⁰ Op. cit. Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 591.

⁷¹ The correct Tibetan spelling of *Achung* is not to be cleared up by the sources. The letter A is given as Tibetan a' by HZZG (1985, p. 147), yet Pu (1990, p. 477) designates it as the Tibetan alphabet's last letter A. Furthermore, *chung* is spelled ch-u-*ng* in HZZG—having the single meaning of 'small, little, junior' etc.

which does not make sense here. On the other hand, the pronunciation *jung*, coming out of the spelling b-y-u-*ng* would fit to the meaning as of 'form' (CDCT 1976, P. 1101) which is the perfect tense of '*byung ba*' (Das 1902a, p. 924; TCD 1979, p. 597). According to Das '*byung ba*' means 'to come forth, arise, emerge, appear', thus delivering *Ajung* as the '[letter] A [that has] arisen [in the mountain]'. PRHA (1989, p. 282) writes *An chung gnam rdzong*.

⁷² See Dentig Monastery, pp. 80-85, and Baima Si of Martsang Drag, chapter 2.4., pp. 50-52.

⁷³ Chinese transcription: Banma Renzeng (cp. Pu 1990, p. 477, HZZG 1985, p. 148).

⁷⁴ For the detailed story of Pälgyi Dorje see, for ex., Obermiller 1932, Reprint 1986, pp. 198f, or Gruschke 1996, pp. 171-174. When Obermiller translated that Pälgyi Dorje 'departed to Kham' (p.199) it should be noted that old Tibetan sources do not distinguish Amdo from Kham, but rather designate an entire *mdo khams* region. Translators often choose Kham when translating, but the area concerned may also be located in Amdo.

⁷⁵ Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 592. Maybe he means the site of Setsa Gompa.

⁷⁶ Main source: PRHA 1989, pp. 279f; Pu 1990, pp. 471-473, Pu 1991a, pp. 64-66.

⁷⁷ *Khamtsen* are residential sub-units of large monasteries' colleges, especially in Drepung, Sera and Ganden. Both colleges and khamtsen are corporate entities where loyalties of the monks were primarily rooted. For further reading see Goldstein 1989/ 1993, pp. 24-33.

⁷⁸ Goldstein (1989/ 1993, p. 31) notes that in Drepung Monastery's Loseling college three of 23 khamtsen 'held virtually all the power ... [and] were composed predominantly of monks from Kham (eastern Tibet)... In general, roughly 65 to 70 percent of Loseling's monks were from Kham, with many, if not most, being from regions under Chinese control.' Here I am submitting three reasons why I suggest that the majority of those 'monks from Kham' are likely to be of Amdo origin: 1. Central Tibetans often seem to use the term *Kham* as an abbreviation for *mdo khams*, that is eastern **and** northeastern Tibet, thus including Amdo. 2. The number of famous learned lamas of Amdo seems to me much higher than of those from Kham. 3. As will be seen in a separate volume on Kham, Gelugpa lamaseries in Kham mostly concentrated along the trade routes, especially in those regions of Kham which were out of Lhasa's control. The hinterland of those trade routes was dominated by monasteries of the Sakya (northern Kham), Kagyüpa (northern and central Kham) and Nyingmapa (central and northern Kham and southern Amdo). At the same time, the Gelugpa had taken control over nearly the entire central region of Amdo, being the most populated part of the Tibetan Highland. Thus we may assume that there were many more Gelugpa monas-

teries, monks and lamas trying to be represented in Lhasa's 'Three Seats'. While the importance of Amdo lamaseries can easily be deduced from our sources, there is not enough information to hand about the structure of the Three Seats' colleges and khamtsen.

⁷⁹ With 16 khamtsen at the beginning of the 20th century, this Gomang college had become one of the most influential Gelugpa colleges in central Tibetan policy, secondary only to Loseling. Here also, Amdo monks had a stronghold.

⁸⁰ Main sources: PRHA 1989, pp. 256-274; Pu 1990, pp. 463-467; Wylie 1962, pp. 107, 192 n. 725; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 32-34.

⁸¹ A statistical survey of 1955 counted 18 incarnate lamas.

⁸² Rikon map; Verhufen, p. 89; Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 599) spells Thrikha, *khri ska*.

⁸³ Sources: HNZG 1984, pp. 169-171; PRHA 1989, pp. 282-291; Pu 1990, pp. 162-205; Rock 1956, pp. 17-19; Wylie 1962, pp. 107, 192 n. 723.

⁸⁴ Hermanns (1965, p. 234) sees the Tuyuhun as 'Tibetans who have absorbed different nomads of other races, [such as] Sien pi, Turks and Old-Mongols.' Anthropologically we would rather speak of proto-Tibetans and proto-Mongols as the ethnogenesis of these peoples was just about to start, as was the formation of their states. Originally a part of the Central Asian *Xianbi* (Sien pi) nomads living in southern Manchuria (Liaodong), some 600 aristocratic *Tuyuhun* households, moved westward into Amdo at the beginning of the 4th century. Mixing with local Qiang tribes and assimilating Han-Chinese cultural elements, their power grew and they spread across what is today's southern Qinghai and northwestern Sichuan provinces. In the mid-5th century they established a khanate that reached as far west as the southern Silk Road oases in Xinjiang. After the rise of Tubo-Tibet, the population in Amdo became further mixed with Tubo and Turk influences. (Cp. Liu Weixin 1995, p. 66)

⁸⁵ *Tubo xuanwei si*. It seems that Rock (1956, p. 17) mistook the Chinese term *Tubo* for *tu fan* and the latter for 'local barbarians'. It is likely though that the name hints at the former Tibetan empire's name *Tubod* or *Thuphod*, which is given as 'Tubo' in Chinese. Cp. the short discussion of the term in our introduction.

⁸⁶ Myriarchy (*wanhusuo*) meaning a command of as many as ten thousand households, chilarchy (*qianhusuo*, thousand households) and *baihusuo* were the key structural elements of the Yuan military organization. It was used to administer the entire empire and as such Tibet as well, and was further used by Ming emperors.

⁸⁷ See chapter 6.2., p. 107.

⁸⁸ Other Chinese names are: *Mina Si*, *Mituo Si*. Sources: PRHA 1989, p. 283; Pu 1990, pp. 163f; and detailed information given personally to the author in Guide, 1990.

⁸⁹ Cp. the story of the monks Mar Shakyamuni, Tsang Rabsal and Yo Gejung. See Baima Si and Dentig monasteries, chapters 2.4., pp. 38-39, and 3.4.1., pp. 59-62.

⁹⁰ Other names are *Mile Ta* (Maitreya stupa, *Jampa Chörten*) and *Zhenshui Ta*, meaning 'stupa guarding the waters', thus hinting at that it most likely was once built to protect the town against the floods of the Ma Chu / Yellow River.

⁹¹ In 1996, a new stupa was in construction in Banma county, with about double the size. See chapter 4.5., p. 85-86.

⁹² The cost for this single structure was 160,800 Yuan, equivalent to about 30,000 US\$ at the time. It is not easy, yet impressive to imagine the entire extent of financial efforts made in the last 15-20 years, which have seen the reconstruction of many more than two thousand monasteries all over the Tibetan Highland, with white chörten being secondary buildings in bigger lamaseries. The big majority of those funds were given by a pastoral and agricultural population, acknowledged all over the world as belonging to the poorest people on this globe. They have raised, not least by virtue of the new economic policies in post-1980 China, financial resources to restore, decorate and furnish temples and monasteries valued at more than several billion US \$ by the end of the 1990s.

⁹³ Main source: Pu 1990, pp. 166f.

⁹⁴ *jojo'i lha khang*, Chin. *Zhenzhu Si*; there were just three monks in 1992.

⁹⁵ The first mud-wall buildings and temple structures of Chisa Drubde Geje Ling and Bugu Gon Thösam Jangchub Ling were erected in 1936; those of Karong Sangchen Gatshel Chöling in 1944, of Chisa'i Ngagmang in 1950, Sonag Geden Tashi Chöling and Sonag Tersor (both lie 4 km south of Tsekhog county town) in 1953, and Dokar Ngagmang in 1955. (Cp. Pu 1990, pp. 482-490)

⁹⁶ Main sources: HZZG 1985, pp. 156f; Pu 1990, pp. 487-489; Zhang Chaoyin 1995, pp. 2-24, 79-84. Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 597) refers to this lamasery as Tertön Chogar Monastery, probably for its main incarnation is the Tertön Lama.

⁹⁷ *Biography of the Tubo, Old Tang Books (Jiu Tang Shu)*, op. cit. Zhang Chaoyin 1995, p. 10.

⁹⁸ The explanation of the origin of mani walls, stone heaps and lhatses as early altars where animal sacrifices were done makes clear why yak skulls, often inscribed with mantras, are also found at such places.

⁹⁹ Cp. Zhang Chaoyin 1995, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Zhang Chaoyin & Ma Xiao, in: Zhang Chaoyin 1995, pp. 8-10.

¹⁰¹ Pu 1990, p. 272; Zhang Chaoyin 1995, pp. 16, 22, 44-58.

¹⁰² *lcags ri dgon pa'am 'bros spong dgon pa*, see chapter 4.5, pp. 127-131. For Dzamthang see A. Gruschke, Amdo, vol. 2.

¹⁰³ Such as the mani walls and heaps at Gyana Mani Si east of Yushu-Jyekundo in northern Kham, which probably is the biggest mendong in the world. See: Gruschke (*forthcoming*).

4. Lamaist Sites of the Amnye Machen Region

¹ Cp. Gruschke 1997b, pp. 57-61, 88-94 and Rock 1956, pp. 106-119.

² Rock (1956, p. 149) notes that 'Tibetans usually have names for individual peaks of a range, while the entire range derives its name from one of them, not necessarily the highest. ... the northernmost and the highest, the huge dome, is called Dra-dül-lung-shog [*dgra 'dul rlung shog*, 'winner over hostile winds'], and the central smaller peak Amnye Ma-chhen.'

³ In modern Amdo-Tibetan, written as *a mes* (Hua Kan & kLu-'bum rGyal 1993, p. 638), pronounced *amnye*, it means 'grandfather, [venerable] grandpa' and as such ancestor (Shuidao tigang, chapter 5, acc. to Rock 1956, p. 110). Although never written in books, this honorific title is always used in spoken language when names of such Amdo mountain gods are mentioned. Rock (1956, p. 107) gives other spellings, too: *A^m nye* and *A mye*.

⁴ *Sa bdag* are a class of pre-Buddhist spirits populating the ground, as such they may be translated as 'earth-owners' (cp. Gruschke 1996, p. 45). Other sources see Machen Pomra as the eastern of the powerful four *gnyen* of Tibet, being mighty spirits of heavenly spheres. (Cp. Gruschke 1997b, p. 57)

⁵ Op. cit. Wylie 1962, pp. 105, 116 n. 19.

⁶ Cp. Gruschke 1997b, pp. 91-94.

⁷ This suggests a shamanistic function of the legend's princess, giving to her the position of a *yogini* of the mountain god.

⁸ Zhu 1988, p. 89; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 209-212.

⁹ Op. cit. Rock 1956, p. 116.

¹⁰ See a separate volume on Kham, Gruschke (*forthcoming*).

¹¹ Among the remaining monasteries we find seven belonging to the Jonangpa school, seven Gelugpa lamaseries and one single Kagyüpa monastery; the rest are joint Nyingmapa-Gelugpa institutions. (Pu 1990, pp. 260-300)

¹² Main sources: DRM 1993, p. 715; HNZG 1984, pp. 177f; PRHA 1989, pp. 247-255; Pu 1990, pp. 261f; Rock 1956, pp. 64-70; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 35f; Xing 1994, pp. 150f, 159f.

¹³ Rock 1956, p. 69. In his expedition report of 1930, Rock made clear that even the incarnate lamas ('Living Buddhas') of Ragya were of no influence on the Ngolok tribes: 'I called on the local Buddha, of course. Without the aid of these holy men, no intruder from the outside world could last long among these fanatics. ... The Rimong chief, most powerful of the Ngoloks, would probably rob and murder us, predicted the steward. Only recently this wild tribe had even robbed a Living Buddha, ... as his party went over one of the Ngolok trails. / ... the Buddha finally changed his mind and said he would send my messages to the Ngolok chiefs, advising them of my approach. At first, every man who was asked to go as a messenger with our letters declined the job. / ... the chief Buddha, he was powerless. The guilty clan paid not the slightest attention to him; in fact, a few nights later, they stole some of his own horses and sheep. ... News had just reached him that a member of his lamasery, returning from the Ngoloks, had been robbed and killed.' (Op. cit. Rock 1930, pp. 159-161, 164)

¹⁴ With the single exception of Lungkar Gompa (*lung dkar dgon pa*, Chin. *Longge Si*), which was established slightly after the foundation of Ragya Gompa, in 1785, in Cigdril county (*Jiuzhi Xian*). (Pu 1990, pp. 195f)

¹⁵ It is also called Arig Ragyagar (*A rig Ra rgya sgar*). (Rock 1956, p. 65)

¹⁶ It seems a bit confusing as to which area of Arig he is related to, as Rock (1956, p. 66) notes he was 'a Mongol from the Ko-ko Nor'. Yet there are other places called Arig east of Ragya Gompa in the Henan Mongol county, and two Tibetan populated areas near Thrikha (Guide) and to the northeast of Kokonor at the foot of the Qilian mountains. The *Political and Religious History of Amdo* (PRHA 1989, p. 247) designates Arig Geshe's birthplace as Arig Cheb (*khyeb*), without mentioning a probable Mongolian descent, though. Hence we assume he was an ethnic Tibetan.

¹⁷ PRHA 1989, pp. 252. Rock (1956, p. 68) tells us the matching legend: 'At the death of his [i.e., Tsong-khapa's] mother Shing-mo A-chhö ... or some time afterwards, there was born a boy who later became a learned lama. One day Tsong-kha-pa pointed at the monk and said: "this is my mother".'

¹⁸ From 1935 to 1957 Ragya was the official seat of Tongde county. (DRM 1993, p. 715) The location of this Tongde's magistrate is shown on the map of Rock (1956) exactly at the location of Ragya Gompa.

¹⁹ Rock 1930, p. 161. The word *Buddha* here is short for 'Living Buddha' which is the literal translation of the Chinese term *huofo* for an incarnate lama (Tib. *tulku*)

²⁰ Op. cit. Rock 1930, pp. 154f, 162. The photos Rock published show clearly that the monk is engaged in printing water-tshatshas and not, as one might tend to assume, in cleaning the brass moulds. Yet, this practice

may have started by cleaning them.

²¹ The Blue Garuda, Chungngön in Tibetan (*khyung sngon 'byung po 'dur ed can*), is described as a mythical, archetypal bird with a sky-blue body, while his beak, horns, and claws consist of meteoric iron. (Cp. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 256)

²² Main sources: DRM 1993, pp. 718f; PRHA 1989, pp. 243-247; Pu 1990, pp. 207-209; Rock 1956, p. 61; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 25f.

²³ PRHA 1989, p. 244. For his support, the Panchen granted him 300,000 Tael of silver.

²⁴ A geshe lharampa gets the privilege to take part at the great debates on logical problems or even to direct these; he may also preach to the monks of the 'Three Seats' (*densa sum*, i.e., Ganden, Drepung and Sera) or to anybody else on the occasion of the Mönlam. They may even once have the chance to become Ganden Thripa, the highest function among the Gelugpas. (Cp. Tucci 1970, pp. 159f)

²⁵ This probably is the reason why Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 601) incorrectly assumed that Tsanggar Gompa was founded by a monk from Tashilhünpo.

²⁶ Cp. Raga Gompa, citation of the water-carrier's personal view in chapter 4.2., p. 76.

²⁷ In Lama Tsensho's *Geography of Tibet* it is outlined as lying 'not far to the northeast of Rma-chen-(spom-ra) is the (area of) A-rig, and down east of that is Mdzo-dge stod-ma'. (Wylie 1962, p. 105)

²⁸ The banner (Chin. *qi*) is a military division introduced by the Qing Manchu Empire and based on the *ulus* unit of the Mongol socio-military structure, being a tribal group within a defined territory (cp. Weiers 1986, pp. 166, 619). Further information on the (Huang-) Henan Prince is found in Rock 1956, pp. 47-50, on the history of Arig Mongols in PRHA 1989, pp. 237-239.

²⁹ Sources: Pu 1990, pp. 492f, and Xie et al. 1986, p. 74.

³⁰ Pu 1990, p. 493. According to Xie et al. (1986, p. 31), Datshen Gön was built as late as 1940.

³¹ Sources: Pu 1990, pp. 494, and Xie et al. 1986, p. 10.

³² Sources: Pu 1990, pp. 495, and Xie et al. 1986, p. 42.

³³ *Ethnisch-Kulturhistorische Karte*, published by Tibet Institut, CH-8486 Rikon (Switzerland), ethnic and cultural map of Tibet for the period from 1280 to 1965.

³⁴ There are two Tibetan spellings of Yarmo: either *yar mo* or *g.yar mo* (S.C. Das 1902a, p. 1131: 'name of a district in the province of lower Amdo and Khams').

³⁵ *Maduo* would be the equivalent Pinyin transcription of the Chinese characters, while the official Chinese transcription system tries to adapt to the actual Tibetan pronunciation, and thus puts its Pinyin spelling as *Madoi* [*oi* as a substite for the sound *ö* that is unfamiliar to Chinese language].

³⁶ In 1988 (Pu 1990, p. 266). For comparison: in Belgium

ten million people live on a somewhat bigger area (30,000 km²), i.e. 1,000 times as many.

³⁷ These lakes are a little bit better known by their Mongolian names Oiring Nor and Kyaring Nor. On Tibetan maps the lakes' names are often omitted.

³⁸ Source: Pu 1990, pp. 267f.

³⁹ According to Pu (1990, pp. 260-300) monasteries numbered as follows:

Gande: 7 monasteries: 2 Nyingmapa; 1 Gelugpa;

3 Jonangpa, 1 mixed Nyingmapa/Gelugpa

Darlag: 10 monasteries: 8 Nyingmapa; 2 Gelugpa

Pema: 23 monasteries: 20 Nyingmapa; 1 Kagyüpa;

2 Jonangpa

Cigdri: 12 monasteries: 7 Nyingmapa; 3 Gelugpa;

2 Jonangpa

⁴⁰ Further source, besides own information given in situ: Pu 1990, p. 275.

⁴¹ During my 1996 visit the key-holder was absent.

⁴² This Buddhist order will be discussed together with Dzamthang Tsangwa Monastery, which is the mother institution of Lungkyä Gompa, in A. Gruschke, volume 2.

⁴³ See chapter 3.5., p. 71.

⁴⁴ Further source, besides own information given in situ: Pu 1990, pp. 277f. The name given there is *thub bstan khra gling dgon bkra shis chos ldan gling*.

⁴⁵ The site may be familiar to those who have seen the Chinese-Tibetan movie *The Horse Robber* (*matou*).

⁴⁶ Further sources: Gyurme Dorje 1996, pp. 615f; Pu 1990, pp. 294f; Xing 1994, pp. 158f. In situ, the name was given to me as *dpal yul dar thang mdo gyud thos bsam gling*.

⁴⁷ It thus exceeds the spatial extension of the famous Kumbum Jampa Ling (Chin. *Ta'er Si*). The latter occupies an area of about 40 ha (Zhu Xianlu et al. 1988, p. 24).

⁴⁸ According to Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 616) these were cast by Chamdo artisans.

⁴⁹ For the legendary outcome of the tribes' ancestors see Xing 1994, p. 170, and Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 199f.

⁵⁰ Gyurme Dorje, p. 617. Tibetan spelling: *pad ma*, Chinese spelling: *banma* (written with the characters *bai* and *ma*). The meaning of *Pema* is 'lotus flower' and the county's name is due to the circumstance that wild lotus can be found there.

⁵¹ Cp. CMCR 1996, map p. 81, and texts pp. 175-177.

⁵² Pu 1990, p. 282.

⁵³ Xing 1994, pp. 146-151.

⁵⁴ In situ, the name was given to me as *mdo gor ma dgon brag dka ra lta ri*. Other spellings are *mdo 'gab ma dgon pa* and *mdo thog dgon*. Further source, besides

own information given in situ: Pu 1990, p. 289.

⁵⁵ In Lhodrag's Serkhar Guthog, southern Tibet. Cp. Henss (*forthcoming*).

⁵⁶ A visit in 2000 revealed eight chapels—one on each floor except the ground-floor.

⁵⁷ Further sources, besides own information given locally, are: Pu 1990, p. 287, and Zhang Chaoyin 1995, pp. 12, 98-106.

⁵⁸ The name Sangdag Pari (*sangs bdag dpa' ri*, mostly pronounced *Sangdag Hwaré*) is likely to be a modified form of *Sangdog Pelri* (*zangs mdo dpal ri*) which is the designation of similar structures in Kathog and Peyül Darthang Gompa (see above). It thus hints at the Magnificent Copper Mountain paradise of Padmasambhava, while the modified form may be interpreted as 'Magnificent Mountain (*dpal ri*) of the Purified Self' (*sangs bdag*)'. Be it modified or not, we continue to use the local term, thus distinguishing the architectural complex viewed here (*Sangdag Hwaré*) from the paradise of Padmasambhava (*Sangdog Pelri*).

⁵⁹ Mendong consisting of holy scriptures, mostly Kanjur and Tanjur, seem to be a speciality of early 20th century Amdo, especially in the Ngolok-Seta realm. Cp. also chapters 3.5. and Amdo, volume 2.

⁶⁰ Cp. the kumbum chörten of Gyantse's Pelkor Chöde Monastery, the kumbum chörten of Jonang and of Riwoche.

⁶¹ Cp. Henss 1981, pp. 156-162.

⁶² In Gelugpa-dominated central Tibet this may have been caused by the considerable tacit political pressure; but it is totally different in southern Amdo where there is hardly any Gelugpa monastery to be found. The integration of Gelugpa images in a Nyingmapa monastery is the visible expression—in iconography—of the 19th century Rime (*ris med*) Movement's attempt to create 'a synthesis of academic and shamanic aspects of Tibetan religion that maintained the academic tradition but retained a much more central place for the shamanic vision than the Gelugpa synthesis allowed.' (Op. cit. Samuel 1993, p. 542) This Rime Movement, originating in eastern Tibet, did not reject one path in search for enlightenment in favour of another, but tended to 'maintain all paths possible as options that might be suitable for particular students... Consequently, a central aspect of Rimed was the bringing together and transmitting of the numerous diverse traditions of Tantric yoga practice that had developed in Tibet over the preceding ten centuries.' (ibid., p. 541) Rime lamas came from Nyingmapa, Sakya and Kagyüpa monasteries, but stood up for overcoming the sectarian divisions among the various Tibetan-Buddhist traditions. (Cp. ibid.,

pp. 533-543) Although the Rime Movement was and is sustained by all non-Gelugpa schools, it is likely that the latter were not explicitly ruled out.

⁶³ According to the *trikaya* conception, the state of Buddhahood is certainly an inconceivable reality beyond all categories of thought, but is analyzed into Three Bodies: a Truth Body (*Dharmakaya*), a Beatific Body (*Sambhogakaya*) and an Emanation Body (*Nirmanakaya*). They are generally called body, yet represent the ultimate development of ordinary mind, speech, and body, respectively.

⁶⁴ Cp. Rhie & Thurman 1996, p. 476.

⁶⁵ Op. cit. Tucci 1949, p. 617, n. 295.

⁶⁶ Op. cit. Rhie & Thurman 1991, p. 181.

⁶⁷ Essen & Thingo 1991, p. 25; Rhie & Thurman 1991, p. 363.

⁶⁸ Count according to CMCR p. 177 (No.56-C₁₀₋₂).

⁶⁹ On a visit in 1996, the monks wrote down the monastery's name as *jo nang ngis don rdgas bstan bshad bsgrub 'phel rgyas gling*. Further sources, besides own information given in situ, are: CMCR 1996, p. 177; Pu 1990, pp. 286f; Pu & Lamao 1993, pp. 215f; Xing 1994, pp. 165 and 236 (abbreviated name: *yar thang rgya dgon pa*, full name: *a skyong rgya dgon pa des don rtag brtan bshad sgrub 'phel gling*). Most interestingly, the voluminous (742 pages in Chinese edition, PRHA 1989) *Political and Religious History of Amdo* of Lama Dragönpa has hardly any information about the Ngolok region (cp. PRHA 1989, pp. 224-228), and besides the mention of some incarnate lamas, it gives the impression of a monastery-void nomadic realm. This is again the case with Lama Tseden's *Geography of Tibet* (Wylie 1962, p. 105). We therefore assume that access to this region was even difficult for Tibetans from Gelugpa-controlled central Amdo.

⁷⁰ The Chinese names derive from the village near which the monastery lies: in Achinggya (Chin. *Ashijiangjia*) village of Yarthang (*Yaritang*) community.

⁷¹ Name taken from Chinese source (Pu 1990, p. 287): *Chilie Namjie* in Pinyin spelling, which—in pronunciation—is close to the articulation of this Tibetan name.

⁷² Xing 1994, p. 165.

⁷³ Unfortunately, we only had access to a few chapels, as due to limited time the problem of absent key-holders was predominant (single visit in 1996).

⁷⁴ For more information on the Jonangpas see chapter 12.2., pp. 225-228.

⁷⁵ Source: Pu 1990, p. 284.

⁷⁶ Sources: Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 618; Pu 1990, pp. 291f; Xing 1994, pp. 165f.

5. Kokonor Region and Tsaidam Basin

¹ Op. cit. Das (1902a, p. 675): ‘*Mdo* and *Khams*, indicates Amdo, the province of Tibet S.E. of Kökö Nor, and Kham’.

² Cp. Wylie 1962 and PRHA 1989.

³ Cp. Gruschke 1997a, p. 283. Even from Gyurme Dorje’s *Tibet Handbook* (1996, pp. 556-557), one can indirectly read that Tsaidam does not belong to Amdo, as he counts the desert basin to what he calls ‘Far-east Tibet’ (although it is rather far-north), but does not mention the Tsaidam Mongols among Amdo’s population.

⁴ This is also the case with Lamaist monasteries in modern Xinjiang, though.

⁵ I.e., the traditional Tibetan Thrikha region. For the latter see chapter 3.4.4., pp. 67-69.

⁶ It is one of the three *dzong* (or *djung*) designating natural chasms which became famous meditation spots of Tibetan monks and are ‘specifically symbolizing the mind aspect of buddha-mind’. Cp. chapter 2.6.5, p. 46 and n. 124 of the respective chapter (*djung/ Shadzong Ritrö*).

⁷ In situ, diverse spelling variations and names were noted: *spkrel rdzong, phul byung*.

⁸ Further sources, besides own information given in situ: HNZG 1984, p. 178; Pu 1990, pp. 219-222.

⁹ There were 300 monks and 5 tulku in 1996.

¹⁰ Another name given in situ (1996) was *Khamshyung Gompa*. The incarnate lama Sangwu was aged 38 in 1990. Cp. Pu 1990, p. 242.

¹¹ Source, besides own information given in situ: Pu 1990, pp. 234f.

¹² In 1996, monks told me of a monastic history going back more than 400 years. This could not be verified in historical records: the PRHA (1989, p. 255) also notes the establishment of a first temple in Mangra (Guinan) at the time of the 3rd Jamyang Lama (1792-1855). Similarly, the given number of 1,000 monks prior to 1949 seems to be excessive, although it should be noted that a ratio of one incarnate lama per 100 monks is quite common in Gelugpa lamaseries, while the Nyingmapa for instance tend to have a ratio of between 1:30 and even up to 1:10.

¹³ For further reading concerning the legendary background see Gruschke 1997b, pp. 103-108, and p. 130; and Gyurme Dorje 1996, p. 569.

¹⁴ Sources: CMCR 1996, p. 150; Gyurme Dorje 1996, pp. 570f; Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, p. 128; Zhu 1988, pp. 67-69.

¹⁵ Cp. Huc & Gabet 1855, pp. 235-238.

¹⁶ Further sources: Pu 1990, pp. 423f; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 54f; Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 131f. In Pu (1990) the monastery’s name is given as *sa mtho dgal ldan dgon*..., which obviously is a misprint.

¹⁷ This large monastery with the full religious name of Detsha Tashi Chöding (*lde tsha bkra shis chos sdings*) was also founded only in 1903, yet developed rapidly, the upper lamastery having nearly 800 monks in the 1940s, and still 571 monks and 12 incarnate lamas before 1958. (Cp. Pu 1990, pp. 92-94)

¹⁸ Further source: Pu 1990, pp. 420f.

¹⁹ Further source: Pu 1990, pp. 426f; Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 144f.

²⁰ This designation was determined by the Chinese name *bai fo*, ‘White Buddha’, for the highest incarnate lama, the *Chahan Nominhan* (Mong.) or *Sher karpo* (Tib.), respectively. Further Chinese names of the monastery are: *Yongning Si, Gatuo Si, Manlantuwei Si, Tongbao Si, Lamo gongba Si, Daruyu Si*. (Cp. Pu 1990, p. 426)

²¹ It is close to the former nuclear research centre which, after its definite shut-down at the beginning of the 1990s, is housing the government offices of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Haibei (‘North [Qing]hai’, Tib. Tshojang). This may be the reason why it could not be visited before 1995, but in the meanwhile it is open for visitors!

²² For the historical background of Shabdrung Karpo and Lamo Dechen Monastery see chapter 3.4.3, pp. 66f, and cp. Yang & Ma 1992, pp. 304-306.

²³ Other names are *Fuhai Si, Fohai Si*. Cp. Pu 1990, pp. 427f.

²⁴ Cp. Lavizzari-Raeuber 1986, p. 175.

²⁵ Haixi Prefecture has a surface of 326,000 square kilometres. Cp. Gruschke 1997a.

²⁶ Further sources: Pu 1990, pp. 244f; Xie et al. 1986, p. 62.

²⁷ Gyurme Dorje’s (1996, p. 566) designation *Ulan Sok* County just means as much as Ulan Mongolian county. It has a railway station on the Xining-Golmud line.

²⁸ See chapter 2.6.2, p. 44f.

²⁹ See Dars [1972, p. 188: ‘la bürijen-ü šatu (litt. “escalier des trompes”), tour sur pilotis d’où le son des conques invitait aux offices.”] and Tsultrim 1988, photos No. 149, 150, 158.

³⁰ Further source: Pu 1990, pp. 254-256.

³¹ Gyurme Dorje (1996, p. 566) assumes that ‘these Shang Tibetans were forced northwards en masse into Mongol territory during the 18th century, probably due to pressure from the Goloks.’

³² Cp. note 17 of this chapter.

³³ DRM 1993, p. 720.

³⁴ Further sources: CMCR 1996, p. 186; DRM 1993, p. 720; Pu 1990, pp. 250f.

³⁵ This is the short form of *Banchan Xiangride*, which is a Chinese transcription of Panchen Shingde. Another Chinese designation is *Banchan xingyuan*, which means ‘field headquarters of the Panchen’ and hints to the monastery’s function as a major outpost, courier station and base for travelling lama delegations.

³⁶ See note 31 of this chapter.

³⁷ Cp. Das 1902a, pp. 717f and 1070.

³⁸ Cp. Ya Hanzhang 1994, p. 105.

³⁹ Op. cit. Ya Hanzhang 1994, pp. 143-145.

⁴⁰ Following a serious conflict between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen Lama, the latter fled Tibet in 1923. Since then he stayed in Amdo and Kham, remaining within the Chinese sphere of influence and out of reach of central Tibetan forces. Since the Kashag in Lhasa had forbidden the Panchen to return to Tibet (i.e. political Tibet within the bounds of what today is the T.A.R), the Council of khempes did not know what attitude the Kashag would hold towards the body of the deceased Panchen. His remains were not enshrined in Tashilhünpo Monastery until 1941. (Cp. Ya Hanzhang 1994, pp. 301-309, and Goldstein 1993, pp. 113-120, 288-299)

⁴¹ Further source: Pu 1990, p. 243.

⁴² Further source: Pu 1990, pp. 245f.

⁴³ The name Nan Shan, ‘Southern Mountains’, should be understood as viewed from the Silk Road oases of Gansu which lie to the north of the Tibetan Plateau. The southeastern part is called Bei Shan, ‘Northern Mountains’, as from the Chinese counties of central Amdo they are seen in the north.

⁴⁴ Sources: PRHA 1989, pp. 112-119; Pu 1990, pp. 411f; Xie et al. 1986, pp. 65f. It is further called *Xianming Si* in Chinese.

⁴⁵ See chapter 1., n. 34.

⁴⁶ Schram 1957, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Schram 1957, pp. 70, 75. ‘A Red lama ... unbosomed his grudge against the supreme chief of the lamasery who had refused permission for his Red sect to build a temple on the property of the lamasery. “Our sect”, he said, “is as the ear of the wheat plant, and the Yellow sect is its straw. We occupied the country and diffused our Sect long before the Yellow sect was born. ... The Emperor Ch’eng-ts’u, of the Yung-lo period (1403-24), granted us extensive properties—and then came the Emperor K’ang-hsi, who protected the Yellow sect and oppressed our Sect.” These facts reveal the frame of mind of both sects.’ (Op. cit. ditto, p. 75)

⁴⁸ Cp. CMCR 1996, plates-p.122, text-p.130.

⁴⁹ Cp. chapter 1.2 of Amdo, vol. 2.

⁵⁰ Sources: CMCR 1996, pp. 129f; Pu 1990, pp. 410f.

⁵¹ Cp. chapter 2.3., pp. 36-38.

⁵² Also named *Baihe Si*. Sources: CMCR 1996, p. 127; Pu 1990, pp. 415f.

⁵³ Also named *Alike Si*. Sources: CMCR 1996, p. 127; Pu 1990, pp. 418f.

6. Relics of Non-Buddhist Origin

¹ *Ethnisch-Kulturhistorische Karte*, published by Tibet Institut, CH-8486 Rikon (Switzerland).

² Op. cit. Rock 1956, p. 93.

³ The most detailed and, for Amdo, most relevant version of the Gesar narrative poem was translated by Hermanns in his opus magnum on the national epic of the Tibetans (Hermanns 1965). It is a rich source for any kind of cultural aspects of Amdo and of the local Tibetans.

⁴ For an overview of the discussion see Gruschke 1996, pp. 89-103.

⁵ Hermanns 1965, p. 371.

⁶ Das 1901a, pp. 1329f. Information in Jäschke (1998) is even more basic.

⁷ It is the same situation with the Chinese designations of border tribes or ethnic minorities unwilling to assimilate. Although there were special expressions for peoples of different areas, especially by direction (such as Fan, Qiang, Man, Yi a.s.o.), in Western literature they are all—uncritically—translated by the one word ‘Barbarian’. These names certainly had this connotation, yet they did not necessarily mean ‘Barbarian’ in the sense we understand it today. Thus, the designation Hor should be understood in a similar wider sense.

⁸ Cp. Das 1901a, p. 1330; see also Wylie 1962, p. 119 n. 52.

⁹ Cp. Obermiller 1932, Reprint 1986, p. 201; Roerich 1949, p. 63; Wylie 1962, p. 193, n. 739.

¹⁰ Op. cit. Wylie 1962, p. 88. The Tibetan *hwu’u* most likely is a slightly modified transcription of the Chinese word *Huihu*, by which the (late-mediaeval) Uyghurs of Turkestan are named. Out of this term developed the designation for Hui Chinese Muslims, thus adding a further possible meaning of *Hor*.

¹¹ In Wylie 1962, p. 134 n. 170 and p. 149, n. 316, the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty are thought of, while on p. 187 n. 676 Hor has the Khoshot -Mongols’ region of Hor Kandse in central Kham in view. Lama Tszenpo’s Rgya-Hor even hints at the Toba tribes of China’s Northern Wei dynasty (Wylie 1962, p. 112 resp. p. 200, ns. 812 and 815).

¹² Hua Kan/kLu-’bum rGyal 1993, p. 630: Hor = Tuzu. Cp. Wylie 1962, pp. 108, 110.

¹³ See Roerich 1942, p. 302, or Gruschke 1996, p. 96. The ethnogenesis of the Yugur is somehow related to the influence of both Central Asian Uyghurs (Chin. *Huihu*) and the later Mongolians. (Cp. GSM 1989, pp. 190f; Ma Yin et al. 1990, pp. 190f)

¹⁴ Chinese annals (*Gansu tongzhigao, junzheng, tuntianbian*) noted the digging of this canal as having been carried out in 609. When during the 1960s a new irrigation canal was built, the existing old parts were partially used. (CMCR 1996, p. 152)

- ¹⁵ CMCR 1996, pp. 152f.

¹⁶ This extremely important topic cannot be discussed here as an extensive amount of information would need to be given first. For further reference see for instance: Goldstein 1989 and Gruschke 1997a.

¹⁷ Most interestingly there is, so far, not a single record that shows massive political involvement of Nyingmapa order monasteries in the political strife. Cp. Tucci 1949.

¹⁸ Cp. Zimmermann 1998.

¹⁹ Goldstein 1989/1993, p. 2.

²⁰ *Qinghai sheng chengzhi Changcheng tu* [Map of City Ruins and Great Wall in Qinghai Province 1:4,000,000] and *Xining shi fujin tu* [Xining City area map], in: CMCR 1996, (maps-) pp. 27f.

²¹ Some of these city walls had Han- and Tang-dynasty forerunners, since the area east of Xining after the 1st century BC came under Han-Chinese control for the first time. The remnants spoken of here are fortifications erected or restorations done, by the Ming.

²² For an overview on Guide's history see chapter 3.3., p. 95.

²³ CMCR 1996, p. 160; HNZG 1984, pp. 169-171.

²⁴ For further details see Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 116f.

²⁵ Cp. Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 97-100.

²⁶ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 125; Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 142f.

²⁷ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 128, no. 12 and 13.

²⁸ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 149, no. 107.

²⁹ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 185, no. 21.

³⁰ See CMCR 1996, pp. 185f, no. 22-31, and Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 161f. A new publication of Amy Heller (1998) deals with archaeological findings of these sites.

³¹ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 55, no. 88.

³² Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 150, no. 122.

³³ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 128, no. 5 (Menyuan), and, p. 106, no. 164-169 (Hualong).

³⁴ Cp. for instance CMCR 1996, p. 106, no. 164-169 (Hualong); and p. 126, no. 14-16 (Qilian).

³⁵ CMCR 1996, p. 134, no. 87.

³⁶ CMCR 1996, pp. 134f, no. 88-93 (Tongren county), 129, no. 10, 14-16 (Menyuan).

³⁷ CMCR 1996, p. 126, no. 14, and p. 128, no. 2.

³⁸ CMCR 1996, p. 144, no. 3.

³⁹ See for instance an old photo of the former main mosque in Xunhua, to be seen in XSZX 1984 (plate 11 of this volume).

⁴⁰ *Xining Dongguan qingzhen Si*, see Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 64f.

⁴¹ *Xunhua Jiezi qingzhen Si*, see Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, p. 107.

⁴² *Ping'an Hongshui qingzhen Si*, see Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 90f.

⁴³ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 128, and Zhang Zhongxiao 1997, pp. 135-137.

⁴⁴ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 183.

⁴⁵ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 184.

⁴⁶ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 151.

⁴⁷ Cp. CMCR 1996, p. 186.

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Avalokitesvara, Tib. Chenmo (also known as Chenmo tshe zhen jun), most important transendent Bodhisattva and protecter deity of Tibet, the most typical of his 108 depictions being the 11-headed and 1000-armed form, the Karmapa Lamas are believed to be a manifestation of him; starting from the 5th Karmapa Lama this latter incarnates the 1000-armed Avalokitesvara's manifestation as well.

ba dang, colourful brocade fabrics, decoration in temple halls of Tibetan monasteries

ba ba (巴巴), a hundred households (lit. "a hundred households", also "hundred"), a military and administrative division of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, designating a compound of one hundred households and the related administration

ba kha (巴哈), the Tibetan language

ba tibon, invocation's pre-Buddhist faith of old Tibet, in present day Tibet a non-Buddhist religious order that has developed very near to the characteristics of Lamaism

barpo, an adherent of the Bon religion

bharpur order, a non-Buddhist religious monastic community that developed very near to the characteristics of Lamaism, particularly in the Khyungmapa

Bopa (波巴), inhabitant of central Tibet

Boyal (波央), Tibetan name for central Tibet, the greater region on both sides of the Tsangpo river

and Rainson as religious moguls, mounting their merit propagating Buddhism; also title of lamas in imperial China

Dharma-king, Dharma King, Chin. Imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

Dhyani Buddha → Five Great Buddhas

Dharma → the true Buddhist

dian (Chin. 帝) imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

Abhishekana Imperial Tutor (*guanding guoshi*), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas during the Chinese Empire

adibuddha, or primordial buddha, naming of the idea of an eternal omnipresence of the Buddha conception, developed in the 10th century in North India

Aksobhya (Tib. *mi bskyod pa*), Dhyani Buddha ‘The Imperturbable’, Tathagata Buddha of the East

amban, imperial commissioner during Qing dynasty of the Chinese Empire; in 1728 began to represent the emperor in Lhasa

Amdowa, an inhabitant of northeastern Tibet, habitually referring to ethnic Tibetans only

Amitabha (Tib. ‘*od dpag med*’), Dhyani Buddha ‘Of Infinite Light’, Tathagata Buddha of the West where he resides in his ‘Blissful Paradise of the West’ (Sukhavati)

Amitayus (Tib. *tshe dpag med*), ‘Buddha of Eternal Life’, another iconographic depiction of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha

Amoghasiddhi (Tib. *don yod grub pa*), Dhyani Buddha ‘The Infallible’, Tathagata Buddha of the North

ani, Tibetan term designating a Buddhist nun

appliqué-thangka, thangka made by appliqué technique, put together from coloured pieces of silk cloth

arhat (Tib. *dgra bchom pa*), ‘Venerable’, wise and holy man attaining nirvana in this life; the first 16 arhats were disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni

Avalokiteshvara, Tib. Chenresi (*spyan ras gzigs*, also *thugs rje chen po*), most important transcendent bodhisattva and protector deity of Tibet, the most typical of his 108 depictions being the 11-headed and 1000-armed form; the Karmapa Lamas are believed to be a manifestation of his; starting from the 5th Dalai Lama this latter incarnation line is seen as Avalokiteshvara’s manifestation as well.

ba dang, colourful brocade festoons, decoration in temple halls of Tibetan monasteries

baihu (lit. ‘a hundred households’, also *baihusuo*), a military and administrative division of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, designating a command of one hundred households and the related administration

Four Dharmakāshas with every aspect of Buddhist banner (1675-1687) (Detail) (for the four Dharmakāshas (scriptural institutions) which may bring benefit to the

Glossary

banner (Chin. *qi*), a military division introduced by the Qing Manchu Empire and based on the *ulus* unit of the Mongol socio-military structure, being a tribal group within a defined territory

Barbarian, English translation of several different Chinese designations of border tribes or ethnic minorities unwilling to assimilate in historic time

Barkhor (*bar ‘khor*), the middle one of three rings of circumambulation paths around a sanctuary, temple or monastery, explicitly used for the one around the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa

bhavacakra, the wheel of life and death, symbolizing the eternal succession of birth, death and rebirth

bhiksu, Skt. term for a fully ordained Buddhist monk (Tib. *dge slong*); represents only a minority of the monastic residents in Tibet, most of whom are called trapa (*grva pa*)

bla, the ‘life-energy’ of a person or tribe, or other beings

Blue Annals (Tib. *deb ther sngon po*), an important historic work written by Gö Lotsawa Shönnu Päl in 1476-1478

Böchenpa (*bod chen pa*), Tibetan name for an inhabitant of ‘Greater Tibet’

bodhisattva (Tib. *byang chub sems dpa*), ‘Enlightened Being’, he has attained the state of enlightenment, but renounces entering nirvana as long as there are suffering beings

bod pa (pronounced *böpa*), Tibetan name for an inhabitant of central Tibet

bod chen pa → Böchenpa

Bökhe (*bod khas*), the Tibetan language

Bön (*bon*, ‘invocation’), pre-Buddhist faith of old Tibet; in present day Tibet a non-Buddhist religious order that has developed very near to the characteristics of Lamaism

Bönpo, an adherent of the Bön religion

Bönpo order, a non-Buddhist religious monastic community that developed very near to the characteristics of Lamaism, particularly to the Nyingmapa

Böpa (*bod pa*), inhabitant of central Tibet

Böyük (*bod yul*), Tibetan name for central Tibet, the greater region on both sides of the Tsangpo river

Buddha (Tib. *sangs rgyas*), ‘the Enlightened’

bumpa (*bum pa*, Tib. for Skr. *kalasa*, ‘vase’), the round and bellied part of a stupa (chörten) (plate 12)

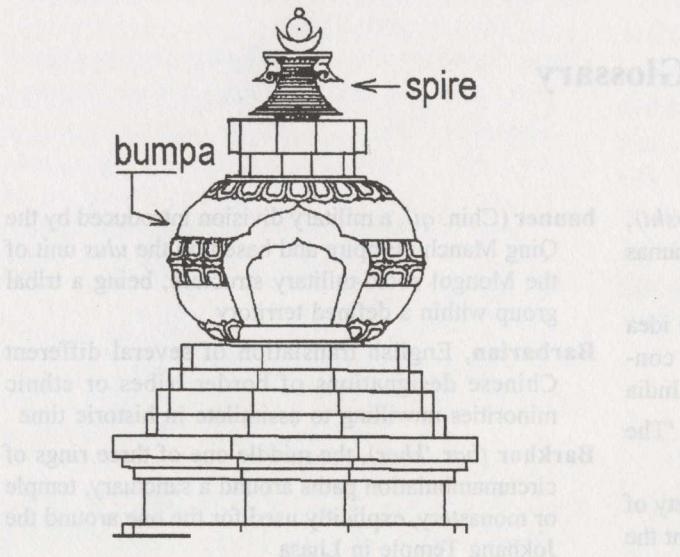


Plate 12. Bumpa

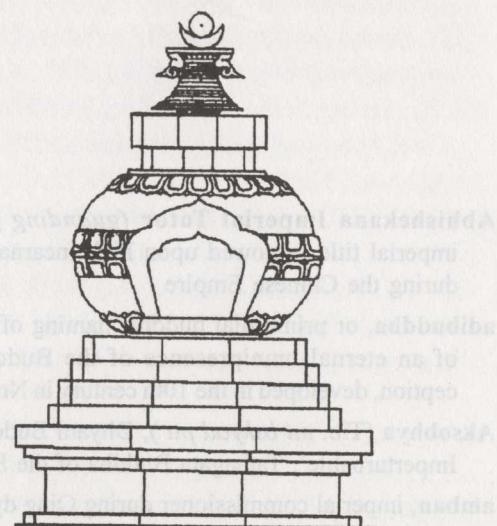


Plate 13. Chörten

büriyenshat (*bürijken-ü šatu*), invocation tower of Mongolian lamaseries

butter flowers (Chin. *suyou hua*), artistic sculptures mainly formed of butter, made and exhibited at monasteries during certain Tibetan festivals

Cakrasamvara (Tib. *'khor lo bde mchog*), an esoteric text as well as the related deity, a wrathful meditational buddha

Central Tibet (*Ü-Tsang*), the southern region of Tibet traditionally considered to be the core of Tibetan culture

Cham dances, ritual mask dances demonstrating the powerful effects of (the Buddhist) religion

Chan Buddhism, a Chinese form of Mahayana Buddhism, propagated by the monk Hwashang who taught a sudden awakening of the Enlightenment state through the absence of mental activity

chanshi (Chin., ‘dhyana-teacher, master of meditation’), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

Chasak Lama, Mongolian title of a specific lama in Amdo

Chenresi (*spyan ras gzigs*), Tib. for → Avalokiteshvara

chiliarchy (lit. ‘a thousand households’, Chin. *qianhusuo*, or *shouyu qianhusuo*), a key structural element of the Yuan military organization, a command of one thousand households, also a military and administrative division of the Ming dynasties

Chögyal (*chos rgyal*), Tib. for → Dharmaraja

chörten (*mchod rten*), Tibetan-style stupa (plate 13)

chösi nyidrel (*chos srid gnyis 'brel*), Tib. ‘religion and political affairs joined together’, historical system of religious rule in Tibet

cintamani jewel, wish-fulfilling jewel

college (Tib. *grva tshang*), study faculty in a lamasery
cultural province, a culturally and not administratively defined area

da guoshi (Chin., ‘Great Teacher of the Nation’), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

dakini (Tib. *mkha' gro ma*), female deity, wrathful form of a yogini; angelic beings, dakinis mediate the Buddha’s wisdom to the earthly sphere

Daoism, **Daoist**, more adequate spelling of Taoism, Taoist, from the Chinese term *dao*, meaning ‘way, path, principle’; the ‘Way of Nature which cannot be given a name’

dar, (prayer-) flag

dar chen, flag-pole

Dharma (Tib. *chos*), the ‘Law’, i.e. the Buddhist faith, law, principles, religion and canon

Dharmakaya (Tib. *chos sku*), see trikaya

Dharma Master of Universal Aid (Chin. *puji fashi*), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

dharmapala (Tib. *chos skyong*), ‘protector of the Buddhist faith’, a class of principal tutelary deities

Dharmaraja (Tib. *chos rgyal*, Chin. *fawang*), ‘King of the Buddhist faith’, designation of the early Tibetan emperors (tsenpo) Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen

and Rälpacen as 'religious kings', honouring their merit propagating Buddhism; also title of high lamas in imperial China

Dharmaraja Dashan Fawang, Chin. imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

Dhyani Buddha → Five Dhyani Buddhas

Dipankara (*tib. mar me mdzad*), the past Buddha

dishi (Chin. 'imperial tutor'), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

dokha (*rdo kha*), Tib. 'vein in a stone', ritually significant spots of popular belief, marked by placing stones; in time heaps of them are amassed

Dölma (*sgrol ma*), Tib. name of → Tara

Dorje Chang (*rdo rje 'chang*), Tib. name of the adibuddha Vajradhara

Dragon King, snake or dragon-like spirits residing in water bodies; term typical for Chinese and related mythologies

dratshang (*grva tshang*), college of a lamasery

Drigung sect, Drigungpa (*'bri gung bka' brgyud pa*), an important sub-order of the Kagyüpa school

Drogpa (*'brog pa*), Tibetan nomads

dukhang (*'du khang*), assembly hall

Dünkhör Dratshang (*dus 'khor grva tshang*), Kalacakra college of a monastic institution

durthrö (*dur khrod*), sky burial site, charnel ground

Dzöge (*mdzod dge* or *mdzo dge*), Tibetan pastoral tribes in southeastern Amdo (Gansu and Sichuan)

dzong (*rdzong*), castle, fortress, and attached district

Dzungar, western Mongols, Mongolian tribes of northern Xinjiang (Chinese Turkestan) who invaded central Tibet in 1717-1718

Eight Mahasattvas, the eight major bodisattvas Avalokiteshvara, Maitreya, Manjushri, Vajrapani, Samantabhadra, Akasagarbha, Ksitigarbha, and Sarvanivaravikambhin

Erdeni Nomun Khan (Mong., 'Precious Master of the Dharma'), imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

fatai, fa-t'ai (Chin., Pinyin: *fatai*, Tib. → khempo)

Five Dhyani Buddhas, also Transcendent Buddhas (Tathagatas), peaceful meditational buddhas forming the Buddha-body of perfect resources (Sambhogakaya), i.e. Aksobhya in the East, Amitabha (West), Amoghasiddhi (North), Ratnasambhava (South) and Vairocana (Centre)

Flower Festival (Chin. *Hua'er Jie*), a major multi-ethnic festival in central Amdo

Four Guardian Kings → Lokapalas

Four Harmonious Friends, Tibetan legend, often depicted on murals, about an elephant, a monkey, a hare and a pheasant; the harmony among them is symbolized by their co-operation in harvesting the peaches of a tree they have grown together (plate 14)



Plate 14. Four Harmonious Friends

Four Heavenly Kings → Lokapalas

gabled and hipped roof (Chin. *xieshan wuding*, Tib. *rgya phibs*, plate 15)

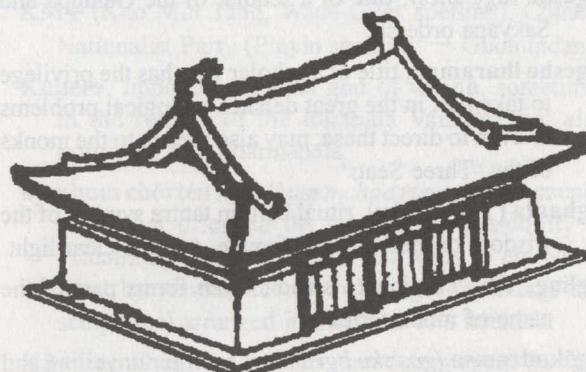


Plate 15. Gabled and hipped roof

Ganden (*sga' ldan*), Tib. for Tushita, the 'Joyful Heaven' of Buddha Maitreya, often forms part of names of lamaseries

Ganden Thrinzin (Ganden Thripa), formally the highest hierarchical position of the Gelugpa order, patriarch of Ganden Monastery

ganjira (Tib. *mdsod bdang*, plate 16) 'treasure vessel', decorative element in the middle of the roof, formed in the shape of a vase or stupa and generally filled with prayer texts, mostly gilded, ending in a spire



Plate 16. Ganjira

Garuda (Tib. *khyung*), celestial being in the form of a mythical, snake-eating bird

gelong (*dge slong*), fully ordained monk in the first grade, obeying 253 rules; Skr. *bhiksu*

Gelugpa (*dge lugs pa*), the youngest reformist order of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by Tsongkhapa in 1409 and came to power during the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama

geshe (*dge shes*), title of a scholar of the Gelugpa and Sakyapa orders

geshe lharampa, title of a scholar who has the privilege to take part in the great debates on logical problems or even to direct these; may also preach to the monks of the 'Three Seats'

ghanta (Tib. *dril bu*), ritual bell; in tantra symbol of the wisdom of the void, the female, and the clear light

gling, Tib. 'continent, island', often forms part of the name of monasteries

gökudramsa (*gos sku bgram sa*), wall for unveiling and hanging the huge thangka for festival celebrations

gompa (*dgon pa*), literally 'solitary place', monastery (from the size of a hermitage to a big lamasery)

gönchen (*dgon chen*), Tib., 'large monastery'

gönkhang (*mgon khang*), temple or chapel of the tutelary deities (protectors' temple)

guanding guoshi, Chin., 'Abhishekana Imperial Tutor', imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas

Guomindang, modern Pinyin spelling of the Chinese Nationalist Party's Chinese designation; also seen as KMT (= Kuo Min Tang, Wade-Giles spelling)

Guru Rimpoche, Tib. honorific title for → Padmasambhava

Guthog (*dgu thog*), 'nine roofs', or 'nine floors', nine-storeyed temple building, reminding of the Milarepa Tower in Sekhar Guthog

gyaltshen (*rgyal mtshan*), armorial flag or banner of victory of Buddhism, gilded round standards on the roofs of Tibetan temples (plate 17)



Plate 17. Gyaltshen

gyodar, a special pattern of prayer-flag arrangement

gyatsho (*rgya mtsho*), Tib., ocean

Han (dynasty), period of imperial Chinese rule (206 BC-220 AD)

Han (nationality), or Han-Chinese, the 'ethnic Chinese' (with changing definitions throughout Chinese history) as distinguished from the term *zhongguo ren*, i.e. 'people of the Middle Kingdom' = Chinese nationals

harmika, originally the body of the stupa where relics are kept, generally a cube-like block on top of the protruding part of the stupa (chörten)

Hayagriva (Tib. *rta mgrin*), tutelary deity, one of the eight major dharmapalas

hip roof (plate 18), hipped roof

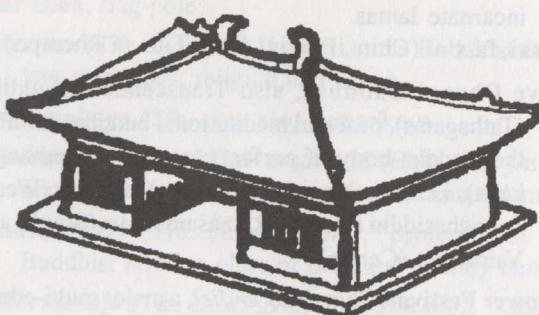


Plate 18. Hipped roof

- hongjiao chanshi**, Chin. ‘Meditation Master, Promoter of the Doctrine’, imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas
- Hongwu period**, Ming Emperor Taizu’s reign (1368–1398)
- Hor**, not well defined Tibetan ethnic term relating to either Mongolian, Turkic or other populations
- Horpa**, herdsmen of northern Tibet
- Hua’er Jie, or Huar Jie**, Chin. for → Flower Festival
- Hui** (Hui-Muslims), ethnic Muslim minority in China and in many parts of eastern Tibet; descendants of the mediaeval Central Asian Uyghurs
- Hutukhtu**, or → Khutukhtu
- Jambudvipa** (Skr., Tib. *dzam bu gling*), in Buddhist cosmology the southern continent of those surrounding mythical Mt. Meru, the temporal world of mankind
- Jampe Lhakhang** (*byams pa'i lha khang*), temple of Maitreya
- Jasakh Prince**, imperial title bestowed upon high incarnate lamas during the Chinese Empire
- Jataka stories**, about the Buddha’s previous lives
- Je Rimpoche** (*rje rin po che*), Tib. honorific title for → Tsongkhapa
- jian**, Chin. ‘room’, a bay = a space unit standardized according to the distance between two pillars
- Jobo Rimpoche** → Jowo
- Jokhang** (*jo khang*), important temple dedicated to Buddha Shakyamuni, most famous is the Tibetan Jokhang temple in Lhasa
- Jonangpa order**, may be considered as a sub-sect of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism
- Jowo** (*jo bo*), ‘Lord, master, venerable’, Tib. honorific term for Lord Buddha, habitually used for Jowo Shakyamuni—most famous the one of Lhasa’s Jokhang Temple—although not explicitly determined for the historic Buddha only
- Kadampa** (*bka' gdams pa*), early Tibetan Buddhist reform order, later absorbed by the Gelugpa
- Kagyüpa** (*bka' brgyud pa*), a Lamaist Red Hat school, divided in many sub-groups
- Kalacakra** (Tib. Dünkhor, or *dus kyi 'khor lo*), a major Tantric system that originated in ca. 1000, of primary importance for the Gelugpa
- Kalacakra college** (or study faculty, *dus 'khor grva tshang*), of astronomy, astrology etc.
- Kangxi period**, Chinese Emperor Qing Shenzu’s reign (1662–1722)
- Kanjur** (*bka' 'gyur*), compilation of Buddhist canonical scriptures ‘of the words of Buddha’, generally in 108 volumes; tripitaka—the ‘three baskets’—of Buddhist doctrinal books, works on ecclesiastical discipline
- and philosophical works, in Tibet this is to say of Hinayana, Mahayana and Tantra texts
- Karma-Kagyüpa** (*kar ma bka' brgyud pa*), important sub-order of the Kagyüpa school
- Karmapa** (*kar ma pa*), title of one of the highest Tibetan Buddhist incarnations of the Red sect orders; believed to be a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara
- Kashag**, the official name of the Tibetan cabinet
- kha**, Tib., part of toponyms meaning ‘origin, source’
- khamtsen**, residential sub-units of large monasteries/colleges
- khatag** (*kha btags*), ceremonial scarf for presentation or salutation, symbol for a polite social intercourse and reverence
- khempo** (*mkhan po*, Chin. *fatai*), originally a ‘professor employed to teach’, derived from the Sanskrit term upadhyaya; later in Tibet customarily the head of a monastery or, in larger lamaseries, of a particular college attached to a monastery
- khora**, circumambulation path, Tib. *khorwa* (*'khor ba*), to circumambulate
- khorlam** (*'khor lam*), circumambulation path, for Buddhists in Tibet in clockwise direction
- Khutukhtu** (also: Hutukhtu, Tib. spelling *ho thog thu*), Mongolian term for ‘incarnate lama’ (Tib. *sprul sku*)
- khyung**, Tib., originally a mythical birg (Roc bird), in Buddhist context a Garuda
- KMT** (Kuo Min Tang, Wade-Giles spelling), Chinese Nationalist Party (Pinyin spelling: → Guomindang)
- Kubera**, important Tibetan god of wealth, sometimes in the retinue of the lokapala Vaishravana; also portrayed as a dharmapala
- kumbum chörten** (*sku 'bum mchod rten*), a monumental stupa that offers to the pilgrim the possibility of visualizing the sacred path that leads to enlightenment by viewing the divine images (paintings and sculptures) arranged in the form of a mandala
- Künsang Gyalwa Gyatsho** (*kun bzang rgyal ba rgya mtsho*), name of a Bön deity in standing posture with eleven faces, a thousand arms and four feet; the expression of the limitless activity of one of the four transcendent lords’ compassion
- Kyanggön** (*skyangs mgon*), a most august title used for the Dalai, Panchen, and Jamyang Lamas
- Kyedor Dratshang**, Tib., Hevajra college
- labrang** (*bla brang*), abbr. of lama phodrang, residence or palace of a lama
- lama** (*bla ma*), Tib., learned teacher, master (guru)
- Lamaism**, term signifying the Tibetan form of Buddhism
- lama phodrang** (*bla ma pho 'brang*, abbr. labrang), the residence or palace of a lama

- lamasery**, mostly a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery
lam rim, the gradual Path to Enlightenment
Lantsha, a kind of ornamental Tibetan script used by calligraphers for religious inscriptions and titles of (holy) books (plate 19)

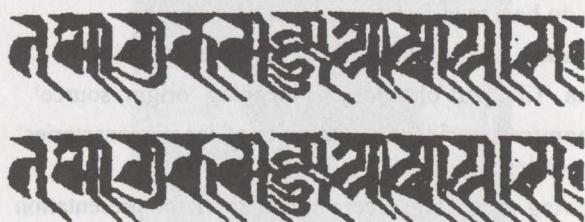


Plate 19. Lantsha script

- latse** (*la btsas, la rtse, la rdzas, or bla rdzas*) → lhatsé
lha, Tib., deity, spirit
lhakhang (*lha khang*), temple, temple hall, chapel, shrine; serves for revering of cult images
lharampa → geshe lharampa
lhato, or **lhatho** (*lha mtho*), stone votive cairns, large square-built altars, surmounted by substantial bundles of brushwood with prayer-flags or large arrows, sometimes like monolithic square chörten
lhatsé (*lha btsas*), also: latse (*la btsas, la rtse, la rdzas, or bla rdzas*), stone cairn, rough heaps of mostly white stones to which sticks or brushwood with prayer-flags are added
lingkhor (*gling 'khor lam*), the outer path around a monastery or sacred place for ritual circumambulation
Living Buddha, translation of Chin. *huofo*, meaning an incarnate lama
lobnyer (*slob gnyer*), students in a monastic college
Lokapalas (Tib. *rgyal chen bzhi*), the Four Guardian Kings, guardians of the four directions
Loseling college (*blo gsal gling*), exoteric college of a monastic institution, faculty of Buddhist logics
lungta (*rlung rta*), the ‘wind-horse’, prayer-flags (plate 20)
Madhyamaka, philosophocal system developed by Nagarjuna
Mahakala (Tib. *nag chen mgon po*), tutelary deity, one of the eight major dharmapalas
Mahakarunika, the eleven-headed form of Avalokiteshvara
Mahasattva → Eight Mahabodhisattvas
Mahavairocana (*rnam par snang mdzad*), adibuddha
Maitreya (Tib. *byams pa*), bodhisattva and future Buddha

makara (Skr. ‘sea-monster’), composite beast, with a body part fish and a head part elephant or crocodile (plate 21)

Manchu Empire (1644-1911), the realm of imperial China during the Manchu-Chinese Qing dynasty

mandala (Tib. *dkyil 'khor*), mystic circle, a centred diagram for the purpose of meditation and reverence as well as offering (sand mandala for instance), depiction of the Tibetan Buddhist cosmos

manikhang, small chapel or temple-like hall with prayer-wheels, serving the devout for turning the wheels and ritual circumambulation

mani stone, flat or round stone carved with mantras (‘prayers’), scriptures, or images of deities

mani wall (Tib. *men dong, sman thang*), extended regular heap of mani stones

mantra (Tib. *sngags*), mystical syllable and magic formula

mantrin (Tib. Ngagpa), a Buddhist faithful (mostly elder men) who have received some religious education and taken bodhisattva and mantra vows, but just a limited number of vinaya vows

mchod pa (Tib., ‘offering, sacrifice’), in Kumbum Monastery wooden scaffoldings of ca. 15 m height used to exhibit artistic butter sculptures on the 15th day of the first Tibetan month

mda' rgod, Tib., arrow

mdo, often taken as toponym identified with Amdo, mdo just means ‘lower lands’, namely the lower part of a valley where it merges into the plain



Plate 20. Lungta



Plate 21. Makaras

mdos, ceremony during which lamas trap evil spirits in thread-crosses which are subsequently removed from houses and villages and destroyed

Medical college (or study faculty, *sman pa grva tshang*)
meditational buddha → Five Dhyani Buddhas

mendong, Tib., mani stone wall

Menla (*sman bla*), Tib. name of Bhaisajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha

Menpa Dratshang (*sman pa grva tshang*), medical college of a monastic institution

Mentsikhang (*sman rtis khang*), Tib., Tibetan hospital

Meru, Mount Meru (Sumeru, Tib. *ri rab lhun po*), the cosmic mountain of Indian cosmology; Buddhist axis mundi surrounded by four major continents, of which the Southern, Jambudvipa, is our earthly sphere

Milarepa Tower, type of nine-storeyed temple building modelled after the one in south Tibet's → Sekhar Guthog

Ming dynasty, ruled imperial China 1368-1644

Ming Taizu, Chinese emperor who reigned 1368-1398

Mönlam Festival (*smon lam chen mo*), the great prayer ceremonies at the Tibetan New Year, initiated by Tsongkhapa in 1409 to commemorate the wonders done by Buddha

myriarchy (*wanhusuo*) meaning a command of as many as ten thousand households, the key structural element of the Yuan military organization. It was used to administer the entire empire and as such Tibet as well, and was further used by Ming emperors.

namchuwangden (*rnam bcu dbang ldan*), a mystical emblem of the 'ten powerful syllables' (plate 22)



Plate 22. Namchuwangden

nam mkha', thread-crosses which are made for the mdos rites

Nampar Gyalwa (*rnam par rgyal ba*), emanation of Bön founder Shenrab who 'radiates the concentrated power of Shenrab, the subduer of demons'

nangchen (*nang tren* or *nang chen*, Chin. *nangqian* or *angqian*), a tulku's residence

nangkor, also khora, Skr. parikrama, innermost of three kinds of circumambulation paths around a sanctum (the others are barkhor and lingkor)

Nechung (N. Chöje, *gnas chung chos rje*), official title of the Tibetan state oracle

ngagpa, Tib. for → mantrin

Nine-storeyed Hall (Guthog), temple hall modelled after the famous tower of Milarepa in Sekhar Guthog

Nirmanakaya (Tib. *sprul sku*) see trikaya

nirvana (Tib. *myang 'das*), state of existence free from suffering, void of all feelings and sensations; a state of supreme peace and bliss, of perfect happiness due to liberation from rebirth

Nomun Khan, title for high lamas

Nyingmapa (*rnying ma pa*), the first Tibetan Buddhist order, the 'School of the Elder'

obo, Mong. word for lhatse

Olmolungring, mythical kingdom of the Bön religion, an earthly paradise in western or to the west of Tibet

- Padmapani**, bodhisattva holding a lotus, one form of Avalokiteshvara
- Padmasambhava** (Tib. *pad ma 'byung gnas*, or Guru Rimpoche), holy and wise religious teacher, mystic and magician; ca. from 763 to 767 he instituted Samye, the first monastery in Tibet
- parikrama** (Tib. *khorwa*, '*khor ba*'), devotional circumambulation, circumambulation path around a holy site or sacred place
- Pehar** (*pe har rgyal po*, *dpe kar*, *pe dkar*), special protector of the Nechung oracle
- Pelden Lhamo** (*dpal ldan lha mo*), name of an important wrathful female tutelary deity riding on a mule; special protector of Lhasa and the highest Gelugpa lamas
- Phagmodrupa**, sub-order of the Kagyüpa
- phodrang** (*pho brang*), Tib., 'palace, residence'
- pönlop** (*dpon slob*), Tib., a local ruler
- Potala**, mythical sacred mountain to the south of India where the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is supposed to be residing; name of the Dalai Lamas' winter residence in Lhasa
- pradakshina** (Skr.), Tib. → khorlam
- primordial buddha**, → adibuddha
- Prajñaparamita**, perfect or transcendent wisdom
- prayer-flags** (Tib. *dar*, *dar lcog*), white or coloured pieces of cloth printed with the wind-horse (lungta), holy scriptures or mantras; they are added to stone cairns or hung up on mountain passes and at sacred sites as offerings to spirits and deities
- prayer-wheel** (Tib. *ma ni 'khor lo*), cylinder-like object filled with scripture and written with a mantra, to turn the ~ corresponds to the reading of its contents
- qianhusuo** → chilarchy
- Qianlong**, reign period (1736-1795) of the Qing dynasty Emperor Gaozong
- Qing dynasty**, ruled imperial China 1644-1911
- Rebgong art**, art school in central Amdo
- Red (Hat) sect(s)**, indefinite term distinguishing the non-Gelugpa orders from the Gelugpa (Yellow sect)
- reincarnation**, rebirth. Certain holy persons, of whom some may be manifestations of divine beings (like bodhisattvas), are deliberately reborn—the reincarnate lamas (incarnate as manifestations of divine beings)
- religious kings** → Dharmaraja
- Rime Movement**, attempt starting in the 19th century to overcome the sectarian divisions among the various Tibetan-Buddhist traditions
- rimpoche** (*rin po che*), 'jewel, venerable', Tib. honorific title for a learned high lama, particularly an incarnated one
- rin po che**, Tib. spelling of → rimpoche
- rlung rta** → lungta
- sa bdag**, Tib. 'earth-owners', class of pre-Buddhist spirits populating the ground
- Sakyapa** (*sa skyā pa*), one of the four major orders of Tibetan Buddhism, established in 1073
- Sangdog Pelri** (*zang dog dpal ri'i zhing bkod*), 'Copper Mountain Paradise', the paradise-realm of Padmasambhava
- sangha** (*samgha*), the Buddhist community
- Sengge Naro** (Singhanada), 'Buddha of the Lion's Roar'
- Shakyamuni** (Tib. *sha kya thub pa*), the historic Buddha
- Shambhala** (Tib. *bde 'byung*), mythical kingdom of Tibetan Buddhism, an earthly paradise assumed to be located 'somewhere to the north of Tibet'
- Shenrab** (*gshen rab myi bo*), legendary founder of the Bön religion
- shunyata** (Sanskrit, Tib. *stong pa nyid*), 'absolute vacuity', a concept which says that every entity and every component element of that entity is absolutely void of any inherent self-nature
- Si**, Chin. for 'temple', 'monastery'
- siddha**, a saint scholar, ascetic yogin, or enlightened wise man who propagated Buddhism; Indian itinerant ascetics of the 7th to 10th centuries
- Singhanada** (Tib. *Sengge naro*), the 'Buddha of the Lion's Roar'
- Sitatapatra** (Tib. *thug khar*) → Usnisasitatapatra
- Snowland** (*gangs yul*), another designation for Tibet
- Song dynasty**, ruled imperial China 960-1127 (Northern Song) and 1127-1279 (Southern Song)
- stupa** (Tib. *chörten*, *mchod rten*), architectonic term for a reliquary shrine, at first of Buddha's remains, later also of other saints, finally just a consecrated symbol and object of reverence
- suburgan**, Mongol. word for → stupa, chörten
- Sumeru** → Meru
- su ru**, Tib., black section of shelf that imitates or is made of cut brushwood
- sutra**, compilation of 'the words of Buddha' as canonical scriptures, the teachings of Buddha
- swastika** (Tib. *g.yung drung*), symbol of infinite creative energy, in Bönism symbol of endurance and continuity. In Tibet a swastika turning anti-clockwise is associated with Bönism, and a clockwise turning one with Buddhism
- Tang dynasty**, ruled imperial China 618-908
- Tangut**, Turko-Mongol word originally used for Tibetans in general, yet specifically referring to the Amdowas

- in northeastern Tibet
- Tanjur** (*bstan 'gyur*), compilation of literary works, mostly consisting of 255 volumes of Kanjur commentaries, and various treatises of religious and general nature; mostly translations into Tibetan from Chinese and Sanskrit texts
- Tantra** (Tib. *rgyud*), tradition of practice according to a certain revelation, mostly laid down in a ‘root text’ (tantra); the objective is to invoke Sambhogakaya deities and thus the experience, or state of being, ideally brought about when the invocation succeeds
- Tantric college** (*rgyud pa grva tshang*), esoteric study faculty of a lamasery
- Taoism, Taoist** → Daoism, Daoist (according to the Pinyin spelling of the key term *dao*, pronounced ‘*dao*’ rather than ‘*tao*’)
- Tara** (Tib. *sgrol ma*), major female bodhisattva
- Tatar**, old designation for Mongolians
- Tathagatagarbha**, Buddhist Tantric concept, theory of perceiving the identity of the nature of Buddha as being one with the nature of all the creatures
- tent camp monastery**, lamasery set up in tents, moved when following the campsites of itinerant herdsmen
- terma** (*gter ma*), revelations, texts regarded as having been originally composed by Padmasambhava or at his instigation, then hidden, and later revealed by a tertön
- Terma tradition**, tradition of miraculous treasure-finding, particularly related to the Nyingmapa tradition
- tertön** (*gter ston*), charismatic Buddhist teacher (mostly Nyingmapa) who finds Buddhist treasures and reveals hidden texts related to Padmasambhava
- thangka** (*thang ka*), portable icon, usually painted on cotton, framed by brocade, and easily rolled up when stored or transported
- thangka-wall**, Tib. → *gökudramsa* (*gos sku bgram sa*)
- thangmoche ceremony**, Tib., ‘sunning the Buddha’, a ceremony of unrolling the huge appliqué thangkas at certain religious festivals
- Thösamling** (*thos bsam gling*), exoteric college of a monastic institution, faculty of Buddhist logics
- Three Bodies** → trikaya
- Three Jewels** → triratna
- Three Seats** (*gdan sa gsum*), the three main Gelugpa monasteries in and near Lhasa, i.e., Ganden, Drepung and Sera, formerly playing a major role in old Tibet’s politico-religious system
- Tönpa Shenrab** → Shenrab
- torma** (*gtor ma*), decorative offerings moulded from barley flower and butter
- trapa** (*grva pa*), ‘disciple’, ‘pupil’, a monk-student in a Tibetan monastery before graduation
- trikaya**: the inconceivable state of Buddhahood analyzed into Three Bodies (trikaya), a Truth Body (Dharma-kaya), a Beatific Body (Sambhogakaya) and an Emanation Body (Nirmanakaya); though generally called body, they represent the ultimate development of ordinary mind, speech, and body.
- Trikaya Buddhas**, Buddhas of the Three Ages (past, present and future)
- triratna**, the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma (his teachings) and sangha, the Buddhist community
- Tshennyi Dratshang** (*mtshan nyid grva tshang*), exoteric college for the study of Buddhist philosophy and logics
- tsenpo** (*btsan po*), designation for the emperors of the 7th to 8th centuries’ Tibet, more often called ‘king’ or ‘king of religion’ (Dharmaraja)
- tshatsha** (*tsha tsha*), small votive clay sculptures made in moulds, in the form of a miniature stupa or an image depicting Buddhist (or Bönist) deities
- tsho** (*mtsho*), Tib., lake
- Tshogchen Dukhang** (*tshogs chen 'du khang*), also Tshogchen Lhakhang (*tshogs chen lha khang*), ‘Great Assembly Hall’ (→ Tsuglakhang)
- tshogshing** (*tshogs shing*), an ‘assembly tree of deities and saints’. It portrays, roughly in the form of a genealogical tree, the main teachers, dharma-palas and yidams of the respective Tibetan-Buddhist school, arranged around a major teacher or the founder of the order.
- Tsuglakhang** (*gtsug lag khang*), originally meaning an entire temple or monastery; now applied to the chief and mostly large assembly hall of lamaseries
- Tubo** (or Tufan), old Chinese designation of Tibet, later used for a part of the Tibetan realm only
- Tufan**, Chin., potential pronunciation of → Tubo
- tulku** (*sprul sku*), incarnate lama
- Tushita** (Tib. *dga' ldan*), the ‘Joyful Heaven’ of Buddha Maitreya
- tusi** (Chin., Wade-Giles spelling: T'u-ssu), indigenous rulers in tribally organized areas of imperial China
- upasaka vows**, the vows of a faithful layman
- Usnisasitatapatra** (Tib. *gdugs dkar*), name of a female deity resembling the 1000-armed Avalokiteshvara, though having 1000 heads instead of the latter’s eleven
- Unsnavijaya** (Tib. *gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma*), goddess of longevity, wrathful female deity with three faces and eight arms, often depicted together with

- Amitayus and White Tara
- Vairocana** (Tib. *rnam par snang mdzad*), primordial buddha in the centre of the mandala, symbol of the origin of all phenomena
- Vaishravana** (Tib. *rnam thos sras*), one of the four Lokapalas, guardian of the northern direction
- vajra** (Tib. *rdo rje*), ‘diamond, thunderbolt’, ritual instrument annihilating ignorance; symbol of the indestructable nature of the enlightened consciousness; in tantra symbol of compassion, having become great bliss consciousness, also the male organ and the magic body.
- Vajradhara** (Tib. *rdo rje 'chang*), adibuddha, symbol of the pure Buddha nature
- Vajrakila** (*rdo rje phur ba*), name of a wrathful meditational deity, particularly of the Nyingmapa and Sakyapa orders
- Vajrapani** (Tib. *phyag nardo rje*), bodhisattva of energy, one of the Eight Mahasattvas
- Vajrasattva** (Tib. *rdo rje sems dpa'*), adibuddha, symbol of the pure Buddha nature
- Vijaya** (*rnam rgyal ma*), short for → Usnisavijaya wanhu(-suo), Chin. → myriarchy
- Western Qin dynasty** (385-431), Chinese named dynasty of a proto-Tibetan population
- Wheel of life and death** (Skr. *bhavacakra*, Tib. *srid pa'i 'khor lo*), depicts the eternal succession of birth, death and rebirth
- (w)**önpo** (*dbon po*), nephew of a lama or a Tibetan prince; in the case of an abbot or lama of a monastery the önpo is from his brother's side and the supervisor of the monastery
- wudian-style roof**, a curved hipped roof (plate 23)
- xieshan-style roof** (Chin. *xieshan wuding*, Tib. *rgya phibs*) → gabled and hipped roof
- Yama** (Tib. *gshin rje*), the wrathful master of Death, a major dharmapala
- Yamantaka** (Tib. *gshin rje gshed*), major dharmapala, special protector deity of the Gelugpa order
- yamen**, Chin., government office in imperial China; in Amdo a princely residence of the Kokonor Mongols
- Yarlung dynasty** (*yar klungs, yar lung*), common designation of the first Tibetan empire, which arose in the south Tibetan Yarlung valley
- Yellow [Hat] sect**, term distinguishing the → Gelugpa from other Lamaist orders (Red Hat sects)
- yidam**, personal tutelary deity
- Yogacara**, a school of Indian Mahayana Buddhism
- yogin**, wise man, generally living in seclusion, having attained a high degree of knowledge
- Yongle**, reign period (1403-35) of Ming Emperor Chengzu
- Yongzheng**, reign period (1723-35) of Qing Emperor Shizong
- Yuan dynasty** (1271-1368), the Mongol-Chinese dynasty of imperial China
- zhengjiao heyi**, Chin., ‘religion and political affairs joined together’, Tib. → chösi nyidrel

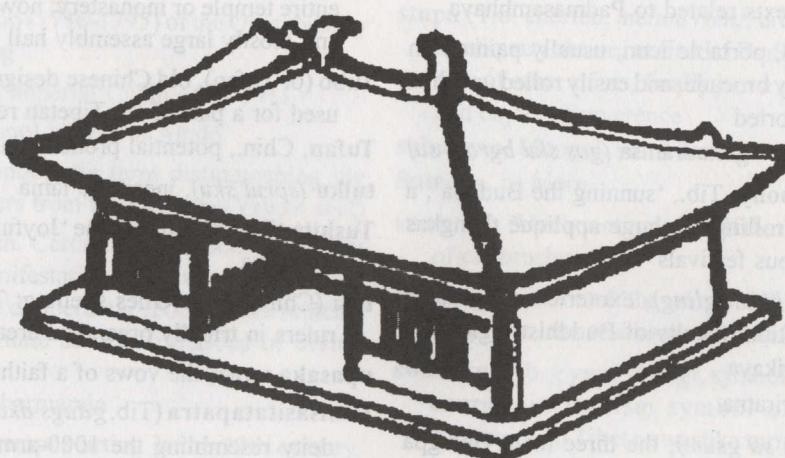


Plate 23. Wudian-style roof

Index-gazetteer

Remarks concerning the spelling of technical terms and toponyms

The transcription of foreign names and terms offers some major problems which may, sometimes, give way to despair. As regards the spelling of Tibetan words, the first decision to be taken is the choice between a scientific *transliteration* and a phonetic *transcription*, for instance of writing either *khri srong lde btsan* or *Thrisong Detsen*. Our guideline for spelling standard written Tibetan is the Wylie system (1959). Even then, there exist, once in a while, different spellings of a word (*lde brtsan* or *lde'u btsan*) even in Tibetan written sources. For better comprehension we chose a transcriptional system (the scientific transliteration put in parentheses or in italics), including letters which are hardly heard in articulation (like *r* in Drepung, '*bras spungs*'). As a transcription tries to render the pronunciation of a word, it depends heavily on the dialect of the Tibetan speaker, and the language into which it is to be transcribed. Inconsistencies may easily occur using sources written in various languages. The transcription used here is rather oriented at the articulation by locals, i.e. speakers of the respective dialects, which may differ considerably, as the case may be, from standard Lhasa language. The latter is used if the local pronunciation is not available. Some words—such as Gompa, Kanjur, Rimpoché, Tanjur, Tashi—are used in the form they mostly occur in Western sources. Other variations, and also inconsistencies, may be due to different informants or sources, and the fallibility of the author during composition of this volume. The reader is asked to excuse any shortcomings.

For Chinese words we generally apply the official Hanyu *Pinyin* which has become widely used during the last two decades. Only some more familiar westernized forms are continuously used, such as *Yangtse river* instead of *Chang Jiang* or *Yangzi Jiang*, for example. *Pinyin* will not be applied to Tibetan or other non-Chinese ethnic terms, except in case the correct spelling could not be figured out.

It should be noted that Hanyu *Pinyin* also attempts to give an adequate transcription of ethnic designations. Chinese transcriptions are often misunderstood when naming places, alleging the latter being renamed. This misapprehension is due to the ignorance of transcription rules (and sometimes to the ignorance of the articulation in both Tibetan and Chinese as well). Chinese scholars are aware of the difficulty of expressing other languages' names in Chinese characters, and therefore have adopted certain adaptations in *Pinyin* spelling (for instance: *Doilungdêqên* instead of *duilongdeqing* for Tölungdechen, *stod lung bde chen*, near Lhasa) to adjust to Tibetan, Uyghur language, or others. It seems that their way of transcribing place-names is oriented at the local pronunciation level rather than from the Lhasa dialect. Thus, Chinese transcriptions sometimes tend to be closer to the actual pronunciation in situ than are many Western transcriptions. In some cases, especially of Buddhist terms and deities, Sanskrit names are given, yet without diacritic marks.

Spellings in cited passages are left in their original form, as in the given context it would help the reader to recognize which different forms of writing are used to designate the same term or name. This problem is met with anyway when checking the extensive literature on Tibet, and may be best dealt with in a coherent context. However, within the scope of this work, it is not possible to include all the various forms of spelling encountered. References from Chinese and Mongolian designations to the corresponding Tibetan terms or names are quoted, though, because of the bewildering complexity of naming places in the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural realm of northeastern Tibet.

Index-gazetteer

Northeastern and eastern Tibet have, to our knowledge, never been comprehensively presented in a western language; therefore, many place and personal names, ethnic and cultural features as well

as historical events are hardly known in the West, if ever heard of. This is why this book offers a kind of brief gazetteer for quick reference. The index therefore includes all those technical terms, personal and place-names, titles, and whatever the author deems crucial for the understanding of the cultural, religious and historical development, social and political life and the outgrowth of cultural monuments in eastern Tibet.

All designations, also personal names of Tibetans, are alphabetized according to the first syllable of their transcription. Names made up of several separate syllables are treated like one single word. Transliterated terms are only exceptionally entered. *Toponyms (place names)* are written as *captions in italics*. The glossary included generally explains terms which are often used in the text, yet cannot always be defined there, and therefore may not always referred to with page numbers. An asterisk is added to names of which the Tibetan spelling remains uncertain, while terms also appearing in the glossary are marked by *GI*.

Aba, Chin. for Tibetan → *Ngawa*, area in southern Amdo (Sichuan)

Achonggya Monastery, or *Dongag Shedrub Ling* (*a skyong rgya dgon pa mdo sngags bshad sgrub gling*), Jonangpa lamasery in southern Amdo's Ngolok region (Pema, Qinghai) 89f, 178-181

Achonggya Rimpoche (18th century), incarnate lama 89

Achung Namdzong (or *An chung gnam rdzong*; Chin. *Aqiong Nanzong Si*), sacred mountain and complex of monasteries in Qinghai 64f

Achung Rimpoche, head lama of Semnyi Monastery, religious and political leader of Pari 101

Ahandalai Monastery, or Geden Shedrub Namgyal Ling (*bong stag dgon pa dge ldan bshad sgrub rnam rgyal gling*), lamasery in the eastern part of Qinghai's Tsaidam Basin, Chin. *Ahandalai Si* 98f, 188f

Alashan, small Mongolian principedom in the western part of present day Inner Mongolia 23

Alike Si, Chin. name of → Arig Ganden Chöphel Ling

Altan Khan (1507-1582), Mongolian prince who adopted the Gelugpa doctrine and introduced the title of Dalai Lama 14, 22, 33, 47f, 61

Ama Tama, a female bodhisattva-like image in Serkhog Monastery 38

amban 99, *Gl.*

Amchog, village in southeastern Amdo (Gansu) vol. 2

Amchog, village in southern Amdo (Sichuan) vol. 2

Amchog Lama, incarnate lama line vol. 2

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- Dalai Lama (*ta le bla ma*), title of one of the highest Tibetan Buddhist incarnations of the Gelugpa hierarchy; generally interpreted as 'ocean of wisdom', most likely just the translation of Gyatsho Lama, who was the first to obtain the title of Dalai Lama. The following are mentioned in the text:
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- Dazha Si*, Chin. name of → Tagtsha Gompa
- Dechen*, name of the Tibetan autonomous prefecture in the province of Yunnan (southwest China) 9
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- De'erlong Si*, or *Shagou Si*, Chin. name of → Terlung Monastery
- Dege* (*sde dge*, *sde rge*), one of the main cultural centres in eastern Tibet, situated in central Kham

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- Diebu*, Chin. name of → Thewo djung, (*a mdo byung bzhi*), see → four djung of Amdo
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- Döndrub Rinchen (Chöje Döndrub Rinchen, *chos rje don grub rin chen*), founder of Shyachung Monastery in central Amdo (14th century) 41f, 52, 65, 214
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- Dragönpa Könchog Tenpa Rabgye (*brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas*, 1801-at least 1865), a lama from Amdo who composed a *Political and Religious History of Amdo* 61, 65, 67, 91, 212, 226
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- Drakar Treldzong (brag dkar sprel rdzong)*, ‘White Crag Monkey Fort’, a mountain (4930 m) which is one of Amdo’s major power-places (Qinghai)
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- Drepung ('bras spungs) Monastery*, major lamasery near Lhasa in central Tibet, one of the ‘Three Seats’ (Densa sum) of the old Tibetan politico-religious organization 1, 22, 32f, 36, 53, 65f, 69, 92, 215, 222, 225, 249
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- Kazakh, ethnic Muslim minority in China and in the far northwest of the Tibetan Plateau 9f, 15f, 96, 100
- Khalkha, Mongolian tribes of Outer Mongolia 15
- Kham* (*khams*), in present day signifying the southern part of eastern Tibet (*mdo khams*); this culturally defined region of the Tibetan realm occupies the east-central and southeastern third of the plateau 1f, 6-9, 11f, 15, 17, 21, 31, 47, 56, 60, 66, 75, 81-84, 89f, 91, 94, 99, 211-214, 222-225, 227f
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- Kokonor Lake* (Tib. *mtsho sngon po*, Chin. *Qinghai Hu*), largest body of water on the Tibetan Plateau 8, 10, 12-17, 22, 27f, 47, 91-94, 97, 99, 101f, 107, 109f, 116, 183, 211, 217
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- Kumbum Jampa Ling* (*sku 'bum byams pa gling*), or:
- Kumbum Monastery* (Chin. *Ta'er Si*), the 'lamasery of the hundred thousand buddha images', founded in 1577 at the place of Tsongkhapa's birth, one of the most renowned monasteries in Amdo 3, 10, 16f, 21-29, 40f, 44, 46, 51, 58, 65f, 68f, 76, 78, 92, 96, 99, 111, 115, 119-125, 204f, 211, 215-217, 220, 225, 246
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- Ladakh* (*la dvags*), culturally belonging to the Tibetan realm, today part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir; independent kingdom from 930 to 1834 7, 221
- Lajia Si*, Chin. name (Pinyin *Ragyagoiba*) of → *Ragya Monastery*
- Lake Kokonor*, → *Kokonor*
- Lake Lugu* (*lu gu mtsho*), lake at the southeastern tip of Kham on the Sichuan-Yunnan border, ethnically mixed Lamaist region of the Lijiang Naxi prefecture 9
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- Liangzhou*, oasis in western Gansu, major staging post on the ancient Silk Road which played an important role in Mongolian-Chinese-Tibetan relations, today the city of Wuwei 15, 43, 219
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- Ling (gling)*, ancient Tibetan kingdom of the legendary King Gesar, located in southern Amdo or northern Kham 9, 74f, 105
- Lithang (li thang)*, Tibetan town and region in south-central Kham (Sichuan) 9, 66
- Lintan county*, Hui Muslim and Han-Chinese town in the Tibetan Kanlho prefecture, formerly the Chinese garrison and prefecture of Taozhou (14) 198
- Linxia*, city and district in southwest Gansu, traditionally seen as part of Amdo by Tibetans, that has for centuries been the most densely Muslim population (Hui, Dongxiang, Bao'an, Salar) of entire China 14f, 51, 58, 221, 197
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- Mar Shakyamuni*, one of the → Three Worthies who brought scriptures to Amdo (9th century)
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- Mati Si* (*ma' this zi*), 'Horseshoe Temple', → Taje Göön
- Mati Si Nan Si and Bei Si* ('Southern and Northern Horseshoe Temple') → Horseshoe Grottoes
- Mati Si Shiku*, Chin. name of the → Horseshoe Grottoes
- Matö* (*rma stod*), county in the western part of southern Amdo's Ngolok prefecture (Qinghai) 81f
- Mawe Sengge* (*smra ba'i sang ge*), name of a Bön deity, divine bestower of eloquence, particularly worshipped by monks who aim at obtaining proficiency in scholastic debate vol. 2
- ndo khams*, Tib. spelling of → Do-Kham
- Mekong* (*dza chu*), the large river flows from the heart of the Tibetan Plateau through Kham, southwest China and Southeast Asia 8, 11

- Menri (sman ri)*, Bön monastery of major importance, north of the Tsangpo in central Tibet, founded in 1405 vol. 2
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- Nangshig Gompa* (*snang zhig dgon pa*), major Bön monastery in Ngawa (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Nangshig Lodrö Gyantshen* (11th century), Bön lama with the personal name of Silie Galuo*, the first Nangshig, a title given to those who succeeded him by accomplishing their virtues vol. 2
- Nangshig Tönpa Chenpo*, founder of Ngawa's Bönpo tradition vol. 2
- Nan Shan* (*Qilian Shan*), mountain range dividing the Tibetan Plateau from the Silk Road and the Gobi 7, 10, 14, 43, 100, 211, 228
- Nanzong nigu Si*, Chin. name of → *Namdzong Samten Phelgye Ling*
- Nanzong Zha Si*, Chin. name of → *Setsa Gompa*
- Napel Sangpo (*na dpal bzang po*) → Taranatha
- Naropa (1016-1100), Buddhist teacher from Bengal vol. 2
- Narthang* (*snar thang*), monastery to the west of Shigatse, founded in 1153, famous for the once largest printing establishment in Tibet (destroyed in 1966) 23, 41
- Nasutai, imperial amban of the Qing (18th century) 99
- Naxi (Tib. *'jang*), ethnic group in Yunnan and bordering areas of Sichuan and the TAR 9
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- nga ba* → Ngawa
- Nga Chu* (*rnga chu*), major river in southern Amdo's Ngawa region (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Ngari* (*mag' ris*), historic landscape and modern district in western Tibet 7, 221
- Ngari Rinchen Gyantshen, western Tibetan Bönpo lama (13th to 14th centuries?) vol. 2
- Ngawa* (*rnga ba*, in old sources also *Inga pa*), Tibetan tribes and area in southern Amdo (Sichuan part), until 1950 quasi-independent from both Chinese and Lhasa authorities 8f, 211, 214; vol. 2
- Ngawang Dorje Sangpo, the 7th Vajracarya of Dzamthang's Chöje Gompa vol. 2
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- Ngawang Könchog Dargye, the 8th Vajracarya vol. 2
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- Ngawang Lobsang Gyatsho → 5th Dalai Lama
- Ngawang Losang Tenpa'i Gyaltsen (*ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*), the 3rd Lamo Rimpoche of Lamo Dechen Monastery 66
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- Ngawang Thrinle Gyatsho* (1678-1739), the 2nd Shargyitsang Lama of Rongwo Gönchen 52
- Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous prefecture*, comprises the southernmost part of Amdo and the Gyarong region (Sichuan) 9
- Ngawang Tsöndrü (*ngag dbang brtson 'grus*), founder of Labrang Monastery vol. 2
- Ngayül Se Monastery*, or Ngayül Se Gompa Thubten Chole Namgyal Ling (*bsve dgon pa thub bstan phyogs las rnam rgyal gling*), the second largest of all Jonangpa lamaseries, in Ngawa (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Ngolok (Ngolok-Seta), Tibetan tribes in southern Amdo 3, 8-10, 15, 17, 59, 71, 73-86, 89f, 92, 105, 214, 224, 226
- Ngolok Mountain* → Nyenpo Yutse
- Ngolok prefecture*, Tibetan autonomous prefecture in the southeastern part of Qinghai province 75, 77, 80-90, 95
- Ngolok-Seta tribes, Tibetan tribes in southern Amdo 8, 10, 226
- Ngoring Lake → Tsho Ngoring
- Nianduhu Si* → Nyenthog Monastery
- Niaodao*, the so-called → Bird Island in Lake Kokonor
- Nida, name of a local protector god of the Tu people in Amdo, personifying their earliest ancestor 35
- Nine-storeyed Hall (Guthog) Gl.
- Nourong* (*no'u rong*), one of the nine valleys of central Amdo's Rongwo region 220
- Nubhor* (*nub hor*), the northeastern part of the present-day TAR 9
- number of
- Jonangpa communities in Amdo 225, vol. 2
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- Nya Chu* (*nya chu*), Tib. name of the Yalong Jiang river in Kham 8, 11
- Nyachukha* (*nya chu kha*), county in central Kham, Chin. Yajiang Xian 27
- Nyala Lerab Lingpa (1856-1926) → Lerab Lingpa
- Nyame Sherab Gyantshen → Sherab Gyantshen
- Nyarong* (*nya rong*), historic Tibetan region, formerly a princedom, in east central Kham (Sichuan part) 90
- Nyenchen Thanglha*, one of the most sacred mountains in central Tibet 51
- Nyenpo Yutse* (*gnyan po g.yu rtse*), the holy 'Ngolok Mountain' (5369 m) 85, 113
- Nyenthog Gar Tashi Dargye Ling* (*gnyan thog sgar bkra zhis dar rgyas gling*) → Nyenthog Monastery
- Nyenthog Monastery*, lamasery in Rongwo valley 54f, 143f
- Nyima Dawa La*, the 'Sun and Moon Pass' (Chin. Riyue Shan) en route from Tsongkha to Lake Kokonor 27, 47, 109, 117, 217
- obo Gl.
- Oirat, Mongolian tribes mainly found in western Mongolia and northern Xinjiang (Altay region) 15
- old trade-routes* in Amdo 109f
- 'Old white-bearded Brahman' → Dramzehi
- Olmolunring* Gl.
- ombo (*dbon po*), or (w)önpo Gl
- Ordos Plateau*, a dry plateau in the loesslands of North China 14f
- Oring Nor* (Mong.) → Tsho Ngoring
- Pälden ... (*dpal ldan*), or (see also →) Pelden ...
- Pälden Sangpo (15th century), abbot of Qutan Lamasery 28
- Pälgyi Dorje (*dpal gyi rdo rje*), murderer of King Langdarma 39, 59f, 62, 65, 222
- Panchen Lama, short form of Pandita chenpo, 'eminent scholar', a title the 5th Dalai Lama bestowed upon his tutor; seen as an incarnation of Buddha Amitabha. The following are mentioned in the text:
- Panchen Lama 4th (Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltshen, 1570-1662) 65, 100
- Panchen Lama 5th (Lobsang Yeshe, 1663-1737) 97, 99
- Panchen Lama 6th (Pelden Yeshe, 1738-1780) 78, 99
- Panchen Lama 9th (Chökyi Nyima, 1883-1937) 80, 99, 228

- Panchen Lama 10th (Chögyi Gyaltshen, 1937-1989) 34, 63, 92, 214
- Panchen Shingde Monastery (pan chen zhing sde dgon pa)*, small but important monastery in Dulan county belonging to the Panchen Lamas (Qinghai) 99f, 190, 228
- Pari (dpa' ri)*, Amdo region lying in the Haomen or Datong River valley north of Weiyuan (Huzhu) 36, 45, 91, 101f, 107, 110
- Pashö (dpag shod)*, region and former dominion in southern Kham 9
- Pehu Gompa (pe hu'u dgon dga' ldan thos bsam gling)* 102f
- Pekhokhö Monastery (pe kho kho'i dgon dge 'dun bde skyid gling)*, monastery in northern Amdo (Qilian) 100
- Peking*, old spelling of the name of the Chinese capital → *Beijing* (Pinyin spelling)
- Pelden Mawe Sengge Ling (dpal ldan smra ba'i sang ge'i gling)* → Amchog Tshennyi Gompa
- Pelden Sedrub Norbu Chöphel Ling* → Chögyal Monastery
- Pelden Yeshe, the 6th → Panchen Lama
- Pelkhor Chöde Monastery (spal 'khor chos sde)*, famous central Tibetan monastery in Gyantse 226
- Pelshe Dengkha Gompa (dpal shes sdeng kha dgon pa)*, monastery in southeastern Amdo's Thewo county (Gansu part) vol. 2
- Pema (pad ma)*, county in the southeastern part of southern Amdo's Ngolok prefecture (Qinghai) 72, 81-90, 175-181, 225
- Pema Dongak Tenzin (1830-1891), Gyatrül Lama of Peyüöl Monastery in Kham 84
- Pema Rinzin (17th century), one of the most famous Nyingmapa tulku of central Amdo 64
- Pema Selitang Chörten, the largest chörten found on the Tibetan Plateau, in Pema county town of Ngolok 85f
- Peyüöl Darthang Ling* → *Peyüöl Monastery (Amdo)*
- Peyüöl Monastery (Amdo)*, or *Peyüöl Darthang Ling (dpal yul dar thang mdo sngags bshad sgrub gling)*, the fastest developing Nyingmapa monastery in the Ngolok grasslands (Qinghai) 84f, 171-173, 207, 226
- Peyüöl Monastery (Kham)*, a major Nyingmapa lamasery in Kham's Dege region 83, 89
- Phagpa ('phags pa, 1235-1280), nephew and successor of the grand lama Sakya Pandita 70, 96
- Phodrang Yongdü Gyalkhang (*pho brang yongs 'dus rgyal khang*), yamen, i.e. government office and palace, of the ruling Yang clan within the main precincts of Chone lamasery vol. 2
- Ping'an (Tib. tsong kha khar)*, Chin. county in Tsongkha of central Amdo 27, 32, 38ff, 43, 46, 108, 219
- Political Tibet*, area of Tibet (Böyük, *bod yul*) directly controlled by the former Dalai Lama government in Lhasa; the present-day administrative unit TAR roughly covers that area 7, 106, 228
- Pönjunang (dpon ju nang)*, Mongolian Qoshot prince who initiated the establishment of Labrang Gompa vol. 2
- population of Tibet 7-9
- Potala* 53, Gl
- Poyüöl (spo yul)*, region in southwest Kham 9
- Pumi, small ethnic group in southeastern Kham and southwest China (Sichuan and Yunnan) 9
- Qianbulu Si*, Chin. name of → Chamru Monastery
- Qianfodong*, 'Thousand Buddha Caves' of Mati Si Shiku → Horseshoe Grottoes
- Qiang, ethnic group in eastern Kham and in Gyarong 13, 67, 223, 228
- Qibu Si*, Chin. name of → Nagdo Monastery
- Qijia Si*, subordinate monastery of Rgolong in Tsongkha (Qinghai) 34
- Qilian county (chi len)*, county in northern Amdo (Qinghai) 102, 110
- Qilian Shan (tri len)* → Nan Shan, mountain range
- Qinghai (Tsinghai, Mongol. Kokonor, Tib. Tsho Ngompo)*, name of a Chinese province with a considerable share of Tibetans in its population, named after the largest lake, Kokonor or Qinghai Hu 1-18
- Qinghai Hu*, Chin. for → Lake Kokonor
- Qiuji Si*, Chin. name of → Chögyal* Monastery
- Qoshot, Mongol tribe, → Khoshot
- Que'erji Si*, Chin. name of → Chöje Gompa
- Quemao Si*, Chin. name of → Chyangmo'i

- Yungdrung Phüntsholing
Quge Si, Chin. name of → Chögar Gön
- Quji Si*, or *Qujie Si*, Chin. name of → Chöje Gompa
- Qutan Lamasery* (Chin. *Qutan Si*), during the 15th to 17th centuries the most important and powerful lamasery in Amdo (Ledu county, Qinghai) 17, 27-31, 33, 44, 46, 125-129, 206, 215, 217
- Qutan village* 27
- Ra Chu*, or *Rakhog* (*rva khog*), river and valley in southern Amdo's Ngawa region (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Ragya Monastery* (*rva rgya dgon pa*, Chin. *Lajia Si*, Pinyin *Ragyago in ba*), most important Gelugpa monastery in the Ngolok region of Amdo 17, 73, 75-78, 80, 95, 98, 160-162, 224
- Rälpacen (*khri ral pa can*), one of the early Tibetan emperors (tsenpo), ca. 817-836, honoured as 'religious king' (Dharmaraja) 68
- Rangtang Da Si*, or *Zhong Rangtang Si* ('Middle Dzamthang Monastery'), Chin. name of → Dzamthang Chöde Chenpo
- Ratnashila* (*ratna shila*) → Drung Kashiwa Rinchen Pel
- Rebgong* (*reb gong*), name of Tibetan tribes in central Amdo (Rongwo area) 10, 42, 51-58, 62, 69f, 85, 116, 221
- Rebgong art 10, 51, 53-58, 146-148, Gl.
- Regong Chuan*, another name of Gu Chu river, or → Longwu He (Rongwo)
- Reting* (*rva sgrengs*), famous central Tibetan monastery, founded in ca. 1057 north of Lhasa 221
- Revolt of Lobsang Tendzin (1723) 24, 26, 47
- Rgolong Monastery* (*dgon lung dgon pa*), Chin. *Youning Si*, lamasery in Tsongkha (Huzhu county), main monastic centre of the Tu people, in the 17th to 18th centuries most influential in Amdo 31-37, 44ff, 101, 130f, 217ff
- Rikon Monastery*, Tibetan monastic institution called Tibet Institut, in the Töss valley near Winterthur, Switzerland 105
- Rime Movement 226, Gl.
- Rinchen Dargye*, monk of Bangtuo* Monastery in the Dzamthang area (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Rinchen Pel (1350-1435), Jonangpa lama and founder of Dzamthang's Chöje Gompa (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Rinchen Sangpo (*rin chen bzang po*, 958-1055), lama scholar and architect who initiated the revitalization of Buddhism in the Guge Kingdom in western Tibet 60
- Rinchen Tsöndru Gyaltshen, founder of a hermitage in Tsongkha at the place of the later Kumbum Monastery 22
- Riwo Tsenga* (*ri bo rtse Inga*), Tib. name of the Chinese sacred Buddhist mountain of Wutai Shan vol. 2
- rje btsun dam pa → Jebtsündampa Khutuktu
- rock images of:
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 - Bingling Si XVII, vol. 2
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- Rolpe Dorje, the 4th → Karmapa Lama
- Rongchen Dodembum (*rong chen mdo sde 'bum*), territorial administrator of Rongwo valley in the 15th century 51
- Rongwo* (*rong po*), a major valley of central Amdo 3, 9f, 15, 17, 51-59, 62, 64, 66, 69, 73, 76, 78, 80, 92, 94f, 107, 109f, 113, 138-148, 220
- Rongwo Monastery* (*rong po dgon chen*), main lamasery of the Rongwo or Rebgong region (Qinghai) 17, 51-54, 62, 66, 78, 92, 139-142
- Ruo'ergai* (*Zoige*), Chin. articulation of → Dzöge Rushar = Chin. Lusha'er, village, now county seat of (Chin.) → Huangzhong Xian
- sa bdag 73, 224, Gl.
- Saige Si*, or *Saigongba Si*, Chin. name of → Ngayül Se Monastery
- Saijangba Lama (Losang Tendzin Gyatsho, 1780-1848), one of the most influential tulku in Amdo 63
- Saiqi huofo, Chin. → Serthri Rimpoche
- Saizong Si*, Chin. name of → Drakar Treldzong Thösamling
- Sakya Monastery* (*sa skyā*), important monastery in the central Tibetan province of Tsang, founded in ca. 1073 and so establishing the Sakya order, one of the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism 51,

- Sakya Pandita (*kun dga rgyal mtshan*, 1182-1251), 4th and most important grand lama of the Sakya order, established the first Tibetan theocracy 63, 68
- Sakya Yeshe, a major disciple of Tsongkhapa vol. 2
- Salar, a Muslim ethnic group in central Amdo, only to be found within the bounds of the Tibetan Plateau 10, 14f, 51, 59, 62f, 67, 107, 110, 117
- Salween (nag chu)*, large river flowing through Kham, Southwest China and Southeast Asia 8, 11
- Sambhogakaya (Tib. *longs spyod sku*) → trikaya
- Samlo Lama (?-1414), Sanggye Tashi (*Sangs rgyas bkra shis*), Karma-Kagyüpa lama from Lhodrag, founder of Qutan Lamastery 28
- Samten Rinchen (*bsam gtan rin chen*), lama of Rongwo Monastery (15th century) 51f, 62
- Samye (bsam yas)*, the earliest monastic foundation of Tibet (around 763-767) on the north bank of the Tsangpo (near Tsetang, TAR) 60
- Sangchen Ngödrub Pelbar Ling* (*gsang chen dngos grub dpal 'bar gling*) → Dodrubchen Monastery
- Sang Chu* (Chin. *Daxia He*), a tributary of the Yellow River taking its source near Labrang Monastery vol. 2
- Sangdag Hwaré (*sangs bdag dpa' ri*), pagoda-like temple structure which is very common in Nyingmapa monasteries in the Ngolog region and Derge area 85-89, 226
- Sangdag Hwaré Temple* → Cagri Gompa
- Sangdog Pelri* (*zang dog dpal ri'i zhing bkod*) 85-89, 172, 226, Gl.
- Sanggye Dorje, Jonangpa lama of Achonggya Gompa 90
- Sanggye Tashi → Samlo Lama
- Sangtawa*, name of a village in the Labrang area vol. 2
- Satho Ganden Monastery (*sa mtho dga' ldan dgon bkra zhis chos 'khor gling*), monastery at the western tip of Lake Kokonor 94, 189
- Satho Lama, lama of Satho Ganden Monastery 94
- Sechen Hungtaiji, Mongolian prince in Amdo 36
- Seda*, Chin. name of → Serta
- Segargutok* → Sekhar Guthog
- Sekhar Guthog* (*sras mkhar dgu thog*), place in Lhodrag where Marpa had Milarepa build a nine-storeyed tower 226, Gl
- Sekya Gömpa* (*se kya'i bon dgon*, Chin. *Serjia Si*), Bön monastery in the Thrikha region (Qinghai) (Qinghai) 69
- Semchog, name of a protector deity 94
- Semnyi Gön* (*sems nyid dgon*), Chin. *Xianmi Si*, major monastery of the northern Amdo's Pari region 45, 101
- Senggeshong Mago Gompa Geden Phüntshog Chöling* (*seng ge gshong ma mgo dgon pa dge ldan phun tshogs chos gling*) → Mago Gompa
- Senggeshong Yago Gompa Pälden Chögor Ling* (*seng ge gshong ya mgo dgon pa dpal ldan chos 'byor gling*) → Yago Gompa
- Se Ömpo Lhündrub Gyantsen* (16th to 17th centuries), founder of Ngawa's Jonangpa monastery Ngayül Se vol. 2
- Sera Monastery* (*se ra theg chen gling*), major lamastery near Lhasa in central Tibet, founded in 1417, one of the 'Three Seats' (Densa sum) of the old Tibetan politico-religious organization 1, 32f, 41, 47, 53, 65, 76, 78f, 94, 98, 219, 222, 225
- Sera Chenba, lama of Kangtsa Gön 95
- Ser Chu*, main river system of southern Amdo's Serthang region vol. 2
- Serjia Si*, Chin. name of → Sekya Gömpa
- Serkhar Guthog* → Sekhar Guthog
- Serkhog, township, Serta county seat (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Serkhog Monastery* (*gser khog dgon pa*), Tib. name of Chin. *Guomang Si*, important monastery in Tsongkha 36-38, 44, 101f, 132f
- Ser Lhatse Sangak Tenpe Ling*, monastery in the Ngolok-Seta region (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Serlung Gompa*, or → Datshen Gön
- Sermakhang Gompa* → Sirin Kar
- Serong (bse rong)*, one of the nine valleys of central Amdo's Rongwo region 220
- Serta (gser rta)*, *Serthal (gser thal)*, *Serthang (gser thang)* or *Serhar (gser thar)*, grassland region in southern Amdo, western part of the famous Ngolok-Seta realm (Sichuan) 17, 85, 90, vol. 2
- Serthang Larung Ngarig Nangten Lobling* (*gser*

- thang bla rung Inga rig nang bstan slob gling*), or *Larung Gar*, Buddhist academy, likely to be the largest Lamaist monastic institution in the entire world 17, vol. 2
- Serthri Rimpoche (*gser khri*, Chin. *Saiqi huofo*), ‘Golden Throne’, a major incarnation line of central Amdo’s Lamo Dechen Monastery 66
- Setenling Gonpa* → Ngayül Se Monastery
- Setsa Gompa* (*se rtsa dgon pa*, Chin. *Nanzong Zha Si*), meditation place and monastery of Achung Namdzong (Qinghai) 64, 222
- Setsen Gung (16th century), Mongolian chieftain or khan 14
- Setshang Rimpoche Lobsang Tashi Rabgyal (1811-1876), incarnate lama of Terlung Monastery vol. 2
- Shabdrung Karpo, Tib., ‘White Buddha’ (Chin. *Baifo*) → Lamo Rimpoche
- Shadzong Ritrö* (*shva rdzong ri khrod dma shva rdzong sgrub sde*), Chin. *Xiazong Si*, *Xiajun Si*, monastery at one of the four main power-places of Amdo, in Ping’an county of the Tsongkha region 46, 219f
- Shagou Si*, or *De’erlong Si*, Chin. name of → Terlung Monastery
- Shang, name of Tibetan tribes 99, 227
- Shang Guanyin Dong* (‘Upper Avalokiteshvara Caves’) → Horseshoe Grottoes
- Shangshung* (*zhang zhung*), early, rather mythical Tibetan empire or kingdom 212
- Shanxi, North Chinese province 13
- Shara Yugur (*'ban dha hor*), tribal area in northern Amdo (Gansu) 9
- Shargyitsang Lama, incarnate lamas of Rongwo Gönchen 52-54
- Sharira Pandita, a major incarnation line of Serkhog Monastery 37
- Shar Kalden Gyatso*, lama who reconstituted the Sakyapa’s Rongwo Gön a Gelugpa monastery 52
- Sharkhog, also called Sungchu (*zung chu*), Tib. area in the border zone between southern Amdo and northern Gyarong, the Chin. county of Songpan 214
- Shatuo Si*, Chin. name of → Satho Ganden Monastery
- Shawu Tshering*, painter of the famous Rebgong art 54, 56, 58
- Shedra Lhakhang (*bshad grva lha khang*), college for Buddhist studies at Ngolok’s Peyü Darthang Monastery 84
- Shedra Rimpoche (*bshad grva rin po che*), head lama of Peyü Darthang Monastery 84
- Shedrub Jampa Ling* (*bshad sgrub byams pa gling*), → Ragya Monastery
- Shenrab (*gshen rab myi bo*) Gl.
- Sherab Gyantshen (*mnyam med shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1356-1415), great Bön scholar and organizer of this order’s monastic tradition; contemporary of Tsongkhapa, a native of Gyarong vol. 2
- Sherab Gyantshen (*shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1292-1361) of Dolpo, founder of the central Tibetan Jo(mo)nang Monastery vol. 2
- Sherab Gyatsho (*klu 'bum mkhan chen shes rab rgya mtsho*, 1883-1968), lama of Dowi’s Gori Dratshang; one of China’s greatest Buddhist scholars 62f, 149
- Sher Dzamthang Sangdrub Norbu Ling* → Chöje Gompa
- Sher karpo (Tib.), → Shabdrung Karpo
- Shigatse* (*gzhi ka rtse*), second biggest and most important city in central Tibet, capital of the historic province of Tsang and modern district seat 25, 99
- Shimen Si*, Chin. name of → Yarlung Thurchen Monastery
- Shingsa Ache (*shing bza' a che*), name of the mother of Tsongkhapa 22
- Shingsa Gön* (*shing bza' dgon nam stag lung dgon bkra zhis bde legs 'khyil*), monastery in central Amdo’s Sogwo Arig region (Qinghai) 80f
- Shingsa Pandita (*bla ma shing bza' pandita*), incarnation of Tsongkhapa’s mother Shingsa Ache 76f
- Shitshang Gompa*, or *Shitsang Ganden Chökhor Ling* (*shis tshang dga' ldan chos 'khor gling*), large monastic institution in Kanlho (Gansu) vol. 2
- Shizang Si* (or *Zang Si*), Chin. name of → Tsanggar Monastery
- Shoule Si* (or *Yangguan Si*, *Fuxiang Si*), Chin. name of → Tongshag Tashi Chöling

- shunyata (Sanskrit, Tib. *stong pa nyid*), ‘absolute vacuity’, a concept which says that every entity and every component element of that entity is absolutely void of any inherent self-nature Gl
- Shyachung Lamasery* (or: *Jachung Monastery, bya khyung dgon pa*), lamasery in central Amdo with one of the longest histories in northeast Tibet 17, 39-42, 44, 52f, 65, 134-136, 218ff
- Sichuan*, name of a province in China’s southwest covering the eastern half of Kham and thus with a considerable share of Tibetan population 2f, 8f, 13, 83, 85, 90, 105, 110, 214, 223
- Silie Galuo* → Nangshig Lodrö Gyantshen
- Siling* (*zi ling*), Tib. name of Chin. → Xining
- Silk Road*, ancient trade route network from China through Central Asia 3, 7f, 13, 16, 43, 56, 100-102, 105, 109, 210, 221, 223, 228
- Simhadhvani (Buddha S.) 215
- simkhang (*gzim khang*), residence of the Chöje Lama in Dzamthang (Sichuan) vol. 2
- Sirin Kar*, also *Sermakhang Gompa* (*ser ma khang dgon pa*), Kagyüpa monastery in southern Amdo’s Dzamthang county (Sichuan) vol. 2
- size of monastic community, importance of ~ in Tibet 220
- Sogwo Arig, a mixed Mongol-Tibetan region in south central Amdo (Chin. Henan county, Qinghai) 79-81, 163
- Sönam Gyatsho, the 3rd → Dalai Lama
- Songpan*, Chin. town in → Sharkhog
- Songtsen Gampo (*srong btsan sgam po*), an early Tibetan emperor (tsenpo), ca. 609-649, honoured as ‘religious king’ (Dharmaraja) 14, 24, 48
- Spiti* (*spi ti*), small kingdom and western tip of the Tibetan cultural realm in the western Himalayas, now belonging to India 221
- stone sutra walls (Chin. *shijing qiang*), like mani walls, but with flagstones bearing inscriptions of entire sutras
 - Cagri Monastery 86, 89, 176
 - Donggyü Dokha Gön 71
 - Dzamthang vol. 2
 - Hor Gompa 70-72, 156-158
- Sukhavati*, ‘Blissful Paradise of the West’, the western paradise of Buddha Amitabha 90
- Sumpa* (*sum pa*), in the antiquity name of a region and ethnic group in northeastern Tibet 14
- Sumpa Damchö* (*sum pa dam chos*), first administrator of Rgolong Lamasery (early 17th century) 36
- Sumpa Khutukhtu*, major incarnation line of Rgolong Monastery in Tsongkha 33, 35f, 101, 218
- Sumpa Khutukhtu* 3rd → Yeshe Panchur
- Sun and Moon Pass* (Tib. *Nyima Dawa La*, Chin. *Riyue Shan*) 27, 47, 109, 117, 217
- Sunan Yugur Autonomous county*, administrative unit in northern Amdo (Gansu part) 101, vol. 2
- Sungchu* (*zung chu*), Tib. county name of Chin. Songpan, in the border zone between southern Amdo and northern Gyarong, also called Sharkhog vol. 2
- Ta'er Si*, Chin. name of → Kumbum Monastery (Kumbum Jampa Ling)
- Taglung Monastery (Amdo)*, or *Ganden Damchöling* (*stag lung dgon dga' ldan dam chos gling*), lamasery in northern Amdo’s Thendru region (Qinghai) vol. 2
- Taglung Rimpoche, head lama of Taglung Monastery vol. 2
- Tagtse Jowo (*stag rtse'i jo bo*), most revered image, brought from Tibet, of Serkhog Monastery 37
- Tagtsha Gompa* (*stag tsha dgon pa*), main monastery in Dzöge county of southern Amdo (Sichuan) vol. 2
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- Tsongkha* (*tsong kha*), the heartland of Amdo, situated in the valley of a major Yellow River tributary and inhabited by an ethnically mixed population (Hui Muslims, Han-Chinese, Tibetans, Tu people, Mongolians) 3, 9f, 14-17, 21, 27-48, 58f, 101, 107, 109, 110, 119-138, 211, 214, 216f, 219
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- Uyghur (Chin. *Huihu*), mediaeval Turkic population in Mongolia and Turkestan with their own khanate; played a major role in China during the Tang dynasty. Then the Uyghurs started to assimilate Chinese culture; already strong sinicization in historic times. Not to be confused with the Turkic Uyghurs of today (Chin. *Weiwu'er zu*) 10, 14f, 213f, 228, 245
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ISBN 974-7534-59-2

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